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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



THEY FIND THE BARONET TOSsing A CHUBBY LITTLE BOY INTO MID-AIR, AMID ITS SHOUTS OF DELIGHT.

FAIR AND FALSE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"I WISH I were dead, but I'm not like to die," trilled forth a fresh, bell-like voice as, with hands under her head, Pearl Marriot rocked herself dreamily in a low, wicker chair.

"What a doleful ditty, my dear!" interposed her father, Major Marriot, smiling benignly at the vision of maidenly loveliness; the pretty head gleaming like burnished gold in the autumn sunlight.

"Don't you like Scotch songs, papa?" she asked, mischievously, waiting a kiss to a gorgeous purple and gold butterfly that was feasting in the huge petals of a sunflower.

"Lively ones, yes. Dirges, decidedly not;

dead marches and such like are not to my taste."

"I've got a fit of the blues, dad!"

"Why?" he asked, nervously.

"I fancy I am a wee bit spoilt, and have too much of my own way; that I am not so obedient and docile as I ought to be!" this with a burst of delicious naïveté, as she left her seat, and threw herself on the smooth grass at his feet, and nestled her bonny head on his knee in her childish, sweet way; "and this person, who is coming to supervise, may, no doubt, be a very estimable person. I am sure she is; but still the Adam of perversity causes me to dread her arrival!"

"Why, my child?" he intervened, gravely; "your happiness is my one aim in life. This step was taken to insure it. The cares of house-keeping, I know, would fret, and may tease you after the free roaming life you have been accustomed to, as much like the birds as possible. I desire to save you from all petty cares and worries for one thing, and to have the wise

counsel and companionship of a refined gentleman for another."

"You are the dearest, most thoughtful dad ever girl had!" she answered, squeezing his tanned hand between her own lily ones, and patting her cheek with it caressingly.

His eyes moistened at the little babyish act, for it brought a tide of recollection of years departed when this girl, now bordering upon womanhood, with youth's mysterious witchery lurking in her deep brown eyes, was the one comfort of his lonely, widowed life, the innocent golden-haired child whose world began and finished with her "dad," as she loved to style him.

Other thoughts, he knew, would in time arise in that fresh, young soul—thoughts that he even dared not dwell upon, lest they might poison his present peace of mind.

It was a lovely sylvan scene; a stretch of fine emerald turf, surrounded by flower-beds, the grand old park belting it in on every side, flashing woods, all crimson and ruddy browns, at a

distance to the right—Broadstairs, its quaint little pier, where the white waves were rippling and curling lazily against its weed-covered timbers, over and above all a glorious autumn sky, flecked with fleecy clouds that resembled tiny puffs of smoke.

Just behind where they were seated stood the grey-stoned mansion, clothed lovingly by venerable ivy and endless creeping plants; some filmy Indian curtains fluttered in the zephyr wind, where stands of brilliant-lined flowers were crowded in the bow window.

It was Pearl's bower, her own particular retreat where she worked, read, practised, or studied. Gilt cages were hung up among ferns and orchids, filled with rare birds. Altogether the nest matched the charming owner.

Waterchase was a fine old place—a place to make the heart glad—so bountifully was it decked with nature's brightest and choicest treasures.

Yet, strange to relate, Major Marriot had not set foot in the place of his birth for nearly sixteen years. Pearl had never seen it till she took up her young life in it a month back.

"Papa!" she commenced all of a sudden, as if inspired by something that puzzled her; "why did we stay away in Spain so many years when we had this darling home waiting to welcome us?"

"Your education influenced my actions!" he answered, evasively. "I wished you to have the advantage of travel, you see! Do you regret it?"

"Oh, no!" she hastened to reply. "I am almost glad this pleasure came now. When I was younger I might not have appreciated it so much!"

"Then you do not reproach me!" this in a dreamy murmur, as if he were speaking his thoughts aloud.

"Reproach you!" she exclaimed, springing up and standing before him, and looking down into his grave, handsome face with a world of tender affection. "A thousand times no! What have you ever done but spoil me I should like to know!"

"If you are satisfied I am sure I am!" he rejoined, drawing her hand within his arm, and sauntering to the house, her white gown floating about her slight figure in graceful waves. Her dainty feet seemed to skim the ground as she kept pace with her father's military stride.

They passed through the oak-carved hall straight into the sanctum. Kitty Read, a trim little maid, rejoicing in a French cap, laid tea.

"I cannot realise that this is our last quiet evening," she said, with a sigh, as she poured out the tea. "I—I almost wish we could set these rules of society at defiance, and live like a pair of hermits all to ourselves. Suppose we go and hide in the woods—ah, dad!"

"That was one other reason for our absence. I dreaded the ordeal of playing host to a pack of people who look upon a country family as their own especial property; besides, you were then too young to help me."

"I am going to try and be a nice hostess, worthy of my stately ancestors who is smiling down upon me," pointing to a picture in a nook beside the window. "She is not the least atom like me, though. How is it I favour none of the ladies of our house? You are the image of grandpa, and great grandpa, too, while I am out in the cold, and like no one."

"But your own little self," he added, smiling at the ruseful young face, as he held out his cup to be refilled.

"Miss Carnegie is coming through the gates—see, papa!" she cried, in a fever of perturbed excitement, as a fly rolled up to the entrance loaded with luggage.

In another instant Pearl had darted out, and with winning graciousness was welcoming a Juno-like woman, whose type of face was Spanish, and whose dark, sparkling eyes scanned the fairy-like figure with eager curiosity.

"We would have sent a carriage for you if you had intimated when you would reach Broadstairs," Pearl remarked, apologetically, conducting Miss Carnegie up the broad velvet-covered stairs.

"I never care to give trouble, thanks, Miss Marriot, especially as I was not certain when I should arrive," glancing round the apartment allotted to her use with a gratified expression as she noted the flowers and books scattered here, there, and everywhere, all tokens of the thoughtful courtesy of Pearl.

"I hope you will be happy with papa; and I thought you would like this room as it overlooks the rose-garden," Miss Carnegie. "I will send you up some tea, then you can rest till dinner. We dine at seven."

"Thanks, very much; you are too kind!" replied Miss Carnegie. "This is like coming to a real home, and one of the fairest eyes ever saw. It seems paradise to me, who have been stived up between bricks and mortar all this hot summer."

"I trust you may find it a real home, in every sense. I never knew what it was to feel the delight of one till a month ago; it is all a novelty to me," she returned, simply. "Papa and I have been roaming all over the world."

"And never cared to settle down here! You astonish me! It seems incredible that anyone would prefer the doubtful comforts of foreign countries to such a grand old place as this."

"We Marriots are somewhat eccentric you will say," laughed Pearl; "but there, I am chatting here instead of attending to my duties—another proof of my eccentricity," bounding away downstairs post-haste to order tea for the traveller.

"Well, my dear, how has Miss Carnegie impressed you?" asked the Major, quickly.

"I—I think her very handsome. She has beautiful eyes; they seem to penetrate you through, as if they could read your thoughts, and she is very nice and stately, and—"

"I was not asking for a catalogue of her personal charms," he interposed; "but anxious to know if you feel you will like her."

"I am sure to when we get to know each other. I am rather a bad one to make friends quickly; but she is very charming, and all that."

"I hope I have done right," he thought, not quite easy in his mind at his daughter's vague answer, for, as a rule, she was a nature that responded immediately to anyone she really liked, and sounded their praises loudly without reserve or stint.

However, all his anxiety melted away when Thyra Carnegie joined them in the drawing room, and with quiet ease and dignity took the Major's extended hand, and bowed with imperial grace before him, her rich black silk setting off to perfection in its plainness, her full figure.

A broad band of gold encircled her throat, another clasped her right arm—a rounded, soft olive one, half shrouded in rare old lace—making it appear bewilderingly witching.

"She certainly is uncommonly handsome!" the Major muttered to himself. "I am not so sure I have been quite wise. She will cause no end of attention with that Juno-like form and style."

Pearl gazed with girlish admiration at her new companion, and opened her heart freely in all sincerity and frankness, ashamed at the reticence she evinced on Mr. arrival.

"So beautiful a woman must be beautiful in nature," she argued; "yet when I first met the full glance of her eyes I shivered, and a strange shudder ran through me, of almost pain. What a foolish, nervous creature I am! X's all owing to dear old nurse; she was always telling me of prognostications and intuitive dislikes till I verily believe I am as superstitious as herself."

After dinner music was, of course, proposed, and to Pearl's delight she found Miss Carnegie a first-rate musician and a fine vocalist. Her voice was a rich, deep contralto, a complete contrast to Pearl's sweet soprano.

"I think we have alighted upon a gem, my dear," her father commenced, when they were alone. "She seems a perfect female Orpheus—accomplished in everything. She will be an acquisition to you. She is elegant, refined, everything one could desire."

"She is all and everything you say, papa. I

wonder somebody has not fallen in love with and married her. How old is she?"

"Thirty; but she does not look near her age by five years, notwithstanding some severe trials and reverses she has suffered. Lady Elton hinted at them."

"Has she been poor?" Pearl asked, wistfully, all the sympathy of her nature touched at the sad thoughts of one so gifted having been oppressed with adversity; "I am so sorry—so very sorry."

"There is no occasion to look so sad, my little one," he laughed. "She is no longer in troubled waters; her worries have ceased three years ago;" then he kissed the pensive little face tenderly, and bade her good-night, lest the roses should be found wanting in the morning.

CHAPTER II.

NEXT morning Miss Carnegie took her station at the breakfast-table by the side of Pearl, who did the duties behind the massive coffee-urn with innate grace.

"I am going to ask you to help me arrange the flowers, Miss Carnegie," Pearl observed. "You have charming taste, I feel sure."

"What I possess is at your command," she responded, in that low, subdued voice of hers which always seemed to be on guard, as if she dreaded its power. Her step was in keeping with her soft oily voice, stealthy as a panther's in its gliding, noiseless tread; but a glance at the warm southern face, dark-skinned, glowing with those dusky eyes, enlivened you even against your inward conviction; in fact, cast a kind of glamour over your sober senses, and you only felt how beautiful she was!

The conservatories were explored and ransacked of their choicest blooms, much to the chagrin of old Peters, the head-gardener, who looked as sour as vinegar to see his pets snipped off remorselessly.

But a sweet smile from his young mistress chased away the frowns, for no one in the household could withstand her winning way; but the new lady housekeeper was less fortunate in gaining their liking or trust, for her manners were to them peremptory, haughty, and unympathetic.

"Her eyes are like black gimlets, they screw into you like," he observed to his colleague, Joe, as the ladies sped off, laden with their fragrant spoil.

"She be a rasper, and no flies," Joe responded. "I'd bet she's got a temper, too; he'd be a brave 'un who'd tackle such a craft;" this with a facetious grin, as if he thought he had said something uncommonly witty.

"Our young lady's no match for such a fierce looking party, that's all I say; it's like putting a lily in the same pot with a deadly nightshade, them's my sentiments," granted Peters, sagely, shouldering his tools and stalking into the adjacent vicinities.

The rooms were soon transformed into a kind of fairyland by the united efforts of Miss Carnegie and Pearl, after which a hasty lunch was snatched in the morning-room; then away they fled to their rooms to dress for the flock of visitors who were expected to arrive at any moment.

Just as a carriage whirled up Pearl flew downstairs, radiant and full of stables, in a soft, zephyr, pale blue dress, a knot of white roses in her bosom.

"Shall I do, dad?" she asked, breathlessly. "For me, yes," he said, catching hold of her hand, and hastening to receive their guest.

"My daughter, Mr. Leslie Keith," greeted the Major, as a slight, dark young man sprang down and grasped his host's hand.

Pearl noted the dark silky moustache and sleepy-looking eyes with all a maiden's timid interest, and marvelled much at the length of his curly hair and turned-down collar.

A train of other visitors succeeded Mr. Leslie Keith, so she had little time or thought to spare on the languishing, drooping-moustached young artist, who lost his heart immediately to the

blue-clad fairy, whom he deemed the sweetest maid he had ever seen, and thought what a lovely Mrs. Keith she would make in his elegant studio in South Kensington, and mentally resolved to have a cut in and win, if possible. With this laudable idea firmly engraven on his mind he followed her about like a shadow, to the annoyance of several young sparks, who were equally anxious to win their young hostess's sweet smiles.

Miss Carnegie looked on the comedy in real life with just a spice of bitterness; it galled her jealous nature to see the admiration Pearl excited.

"It is the glamour of her position and money, certainly not her looks; she is as foppish as skim-milk, and fearfully gawky," she murmured, as she watched her sauntering through the shady, winding paths followed by a regular train of courtiers. Mr. Keith to the fore, carrying a basket of grapes she had been cutting.

"You must ingratiate yourself with this charming daughter of Marriot's, Reg. my boy," said a stout genial old squire over their cigars that evening. "She is a pretty girl, and will be very wealthy."

"I am perfectly willing, sir, to become a martyr," replied his son, a tall athletic young fellow, with a tawny head of hair and blue eyes, one of which constantly required the assistance of an eye-glass.

"Then make hay while the sun shines," rejoined Squire Edmonds, jocularly.

"That's easier said than done, sir. In the first place, there is another already in the field."

"The deuce there is; then cut him out!"

"So I would, but Keith seems to have the running all to himself; it appears the lovely Pearl is gone on painting; he is no mean artist, so there is a bond between them to commence with that will take me all my time to overcome," he said, dolefully, flinging away his cigar viciously, for he heard the soft musical voice of Pearl saying, as she stepped out on the terrace close by where they were,—

"I shall be so very grateful to you, Mr. Keith, if you will. I cannot get the colouring right; it is a sketch of a delicious place of Italian scenery, close to where papa and I lived for many years when I was a wee mite. It is a cherished memory which I wish to keep green."

"Your picture shall be finished before the week is out," he said ardently, for her beauty almost drew him, coupled with her childlike clinging grace. He felt a vehement inclination to snatch a kiss from the tender little mouth, it looked so tempting. When she sat at the piano he constituted himself her attendant to turn over the leaves, to the disgust of young Edmonds and other sighing swains who looked on, green with envy.

The Major was delighted to see his pet happy; it compensated him for being bored and out of his element.

Miss Carnegie flitted about noiselessly here, there, and everywhere, anticipating almost his wishes, handing dainty cups of coffee to the guests, and mortally offending Ella, who termed her "an officious marm" to interfere with his duties.

This clever little manoeuvre enabled her to become on a closer footing with the guests, and afforded the opportunity of darting those electric flashes from her eyes that she knew so well how to use.

"By Jove, that is really a fine woman, Major," a jolly hunting squire, a neighbouring county magnate, remarked; "no relative, I believe you said?"

"No, my daughter's companion; but, as you say, a remarkably handsome creature," he assented.

"Waterchase will be the most celebrated house from here to John o'Groat's, for it contains two very fair flowers, though of quite an opposite type. Of course the palm will be given always to your daughter, for she is the fairest and sweetest girl I ever saw."

"And as good and fair in heart as she looks," returned the Major, pleased to hear his darling praised by a worthy, outspoken man, whom he

knew meant what he said, not being given to flattery of any kind.

"You look tired, Miss Marriot," suggested her companion, as they were going to their rooms. "Let me advise you to remain an hour longer in bed in the morning. I will try to do the honours of the breakfast table, if you will permit me."

Innocent Pearl was perfectly unconscious of the artful design of this woman, whose real aim was to gradually usurp her position to make herself necessary to the master of Waterchase.

"How kind you are!" Pearl rejoined, gratefully. "You think of everything; but I must not commence by getting slothful, just because I have had a little indisposition. Besides, papa would never forgive me if I absented myself from the breakfast-table. Ever since I was a tiny thing he has always had his coffee poured out by me. It must have been quite comical to have seen me perched on a pile of cushions behind an urn as big as myself," bursting into a rippling laugh at the picture.

Miss Carnegie bit her lips with vexation at the defeat of her scheme, then commenced unbraiding her hair till coil after coil fell in massive waves, calling forth a genuine burst of admiration from Pearl, who clapped her hands with glee, as she exclaimed,—

"What lovely hair, and how glossy! I would so like to paint you with it all down. You would make such a lovely Diana, or, better still, a Juno!"

"I am sure you are welcome to do so," she assented, graciously, her vanity tickled at the praise.

"I wish I could!" poor Pearl sighed. "I am not clever enough. I have never tried anything but landscape and sea pieces. Papa says Mr. Keith is a very good artist, and has had a picture hung in the Academy, and purchased by a duke; so he must be very clever. He has promised to assist me with a sketch I did abroad."

"You will become a finished artist under such a master," she laughed, but there was very little mirth in it.

She could not endure the thought of being out by this young girl. She expected every man to bow down and worship at her shrine, and ignore such an insignificant chit of a girl, as she dubbed her.

"Scarcely that, I fear! I'm one of those non-descripts who try their hand at all kinds of things, but become perfect in none!" she protested. "But I am keeping you from your beauty sleep, and Kate is waiting to brush my hair, poor girl—tired out, I've no doubt! By-the-bye, I want you to kindly drop the formal title for the one I love best. Call me Pearl, will you?" this coaxingly.

"If you wish, yes. It is a sweet name, and suits the owner to perfection," taking the girl's outstretched hand and clasping it with seeming warmth.

"Now you have consented to that little arrangement we will seal it with a kiss," added Pearl, affectionately. "It will be so nice for us to become true friends. I never knew a woman or girl friend except my dear old nurse. Papa has been mother, father, friend—all hitherto."

"Then you never remember your mother! I suppose you lost her when you were very young!"

"No, I never knew the love of a mother!" she assented, tremulously, a shadow of sadness in her face.

"You must have had relations! I mean aunts and cousins!"

"No, I never saw one. Papa, I fancy, did not care for my mother's family, so I suppose they have forgotten all about us; but here are we chatting instead of sleeping—truant that we are! Good-night, and happy dreams to you!" this as she kissed Miss Carnegie affectionately, and tripped away on her toes, so as not to disturb the household.

"Lawks, miss, how late you are!" greeted Kate Read, with a suppressed yawn. "Your papa went to bed more than an hour ago!"

"Well, then, we must hurry. Never mind brushing my hair. Just unfasten it and off to bed."

"I'm not going to neglect my duties, miss.

I wouldn't sleep a wink if I didn't brush your pretty hair," she replied, rubbing her sleepy eyes, and commencing her task. "I'm one of those," she continued, "who can't bear to neglect my work. It worries me dreadful, it does. I'm sure nobody can accuse me of that!"

"How you are chattering, Kate! I hope you have not got it into your head that I ever thought such a thing of you!"

"I know you never did; but that Miss Carnegie says I am an untidy slut, or something very like it!"

"What in the name of wonder for?" asked her young mistress, in astonishment.

"Because I didn't go and put away her gowns and rubbish that she left strewn about to-day after dressing herself. I up and told her straight. I says, 'I am my young lady's own maid, I never waits on no one else. There is three housemaids, beside other servants. Please to order them in future, but I never waits on no one, I don't;' and with that I flounced out of the room as hot as fire."

"I am very sorry you forgot yourself so far as to be rude," Pearl returned, reprovingly; "though, of course, I admit she was labouring under a false impression as to your duties. I will explain matters in the morning, and you must promise me to be more courteous to Miss Carnegie in future."

"I don't care so long as she don't call me names!" she answered, so somewhat stolidly.

Pearl dismissed her with an expression on her pretty face of amusement mingled with perplexity.

"How strange it is!" she murmured. "Papa and I think her so nice and charming, while the servants are all in a state of revolt. Really these people get very tiresome; they cannot bear being spoken to. I must be stricter with them!"

Yet, strange to say, notwithstanding this sage resolve, Pearl's bonny little head was buried next minute in her hands as she knelt beside her bed, and, in her petition, besought grace to be patient to those humble dependents committed to her charge, and to judge them with charity and love; then, strengthened in spirit, she sought her snowy face-decked pillow to woo youth's sweet comforting slumber, while angels watched and guarded the lovely sleeper committed to their keeping.

CHAPTER III.

A WEEK flew by like magic to two individuals, Leslie Keith and Pearl, whose innocent, untouched hearts were all of a mysterious flutter at the attention she received from the ardent young artist, who lingered by her side with the pretence of touching up her pictures, or advising upon the art of mixing colours, and so forth.

The Major would look on with an amused smile at her enthusiasm, and praise the dainty little pictures warmly, not dreaming for one moment the dangerous draught Keith was drinking in each lesson he gave to his witching pupil.

The sportsmen rallied him on his defection and neglect of the birds, receiving a quiet, smiling reply, such as,—

"I prefer depicting birds on canvas instead of slaughtering them. My taste inclines to preserving the feathered tribe, but not in the way you large landowners do—breed, fatten, and tame the poor unfortunates, to let loose a horde of friends to massacre them pell mell!"

This answer would bring a smile of approval from Pearl, who could not endure the thought of any cruelty being perpetrated on the meanest insect.

"I shall have to say good-bye to this Arcadia to-morrow," he said, very sorrowfully, when a week and three days had elapsed, and most of the guests had already departed.

Pearl was busily engrossed in filling in a japonica on a piece of velvet under his instructions. He was stooping over her, shading her silk—a waxen hyacinth at her throat gave forth a subtle perfume.

Looking up with a cloud of sudden alarm she said, with a little gasp,—

"Going away to-morrow—so soon! I—I thought you were so—so happy!"

"Happy!" he exclaimed, in a sudden burst of fervid passion, carried away for the moment by the intoxication of her alluring beauty. "Why, I am too happy! Surely you have seen it, and have guessed why! Waterchase is a lovely place, but the charm is its sweet mistress!"

A timid look came into her eyes, and they dropped over the pile of many-coloured skeins.

"Have you no word or look to bid me hope that some day I may ask for this?" taking one trembling little hand, pressing it to his lips and trying to gaze into those wondrous eyes to read his fate.

"I am so grieved," she murmured; "so deeply sorry to wound your feelings, but I never thought of you in such a light," a deep crimson tinge creeping into her face. "I have been thoughtless—nay, selfish! Pray, forgive me, for indeed I can see how foolish I have been!"

"Why?" he asked, in a fever of intense, pained anxiety, for his love was very real now. The gay debonaire artist, who had played fast-and-loose with women's hearts, was caught at last himself!

"I shall not marry, because I never mean to leave papa! I belong to him, you see, always!" she exclaimed, shyly.

"Not if I gained your father's consent!" he argued, chilled by her reception of his avowal, and very much crestfallen, for his dignity had received a blow he had never reckoned upon.

"Papa would never give it," she protested.

"May I speak to him? Will you grant me your permission?" he pleaded, determined to win the prize now that it seemed likely to slip from his grasp. He, it must be confessed, had fondly believed his conquest was assured, that, in fact, he only had to sue and be rewarded.

"If you like, only do not blame me if papa gets very put out and angry," she answered, ruefully. "You see we both made a solemn compact to live for each other for ever and ever when I was younger, and it would be sinful to break it, wouldn't it?"

He could not refrain from smiling at her artlessness—half woman, half child—standing on the very verge of the river of knowledge, yet perfectly unconscious in her maiden purity of the powerful depths of unfathomless passion that lay in her nature if it were only fully roused.

He was elated and joyous even at this tardy concession, for it gave him hope, and his sanguine nature anticipated entire triumph.

"Do you wish me success?" he asked, tenderly.

"It is all so sudden, so strange," she urged, coyly. "I wish I knew what to say!"

"I will tell you, sweet one!" he whispered, clasping the slender waist rapturously, and thinking what a sweet model she would make, of the divine inspiration it would be to him in his beloved art to possess it for ever and aye. "Say, Leslie, I love you."

"How can I say that!" she replied, ruefully, "when the only love I really feel is for papa. I like you very much; you have been so kind and patient, giving me your valuable time and advice. Oh, yes! I like you very, very much!"

This was certainly not the answer he wanted to hear from her lips, and it cooled his ardour somewhat; but he reflected that lovely young hairdressers were not to be found quite so plentiful as blackberries in autumn, and he was fain to appear content with this cold return to his wooing, though his heart throbbed with misgivings.

That evening he had a private conference with the Major, and was agreeably surprised at the temperate and encouraging answer.

"Have you gained my child's affection?" he asked, anxiously. "Is her heart already in your keeping?"

"I dare not flatter myself to say so much, my dear Major, but I assure you I have had Miss Marriot's sanction to speak to you."

"Then you have won my little girl's heart, or she would never have permitted you to come to me," he rejoined. "Well, I can only say she is worthy of the brightest and best man created. I had hoped to have kept her by my side some years yet, but I must sacrifice my own happi-

ness to ensure hers. I need not entreat you to guard and cherish her when she leaves her old father." Tears moistened his eyes at the thought of parting with his pet, and his voice became husky.

"I pledge you my honour that her happiness shall be my first thought and care," Keith responded, fervently, grasping his host's hand in token of his faith.

Pearl was dazed when Leslie Keith left her; it all seemed like a dream.

"What is love?" she murmured, in confused perplexity. "Is it to feel happy in the society of anyone? Leslie says he loves me, and he is clever and nice, and all that."

Here she stopped short, her thoughts could not soar further; all she could realise now was a feeling of unrest, and this the poor child put down to love.

"You have stolen a march upon me, my pet," her father said cheerily, as he took her in his arms to bid her good-night. "You little rogue, so this handsome Keith has supplanted your old dad!"

"Oh! no, papa! no one on earth could take your place," she replied tremulously. "Are you very angry?"

"Angry, child!" he repeated, gently; "can you see aught but affection in my eyes? I knew the time would come when some bold knight would ask me for my only treasure. I could not shut you up in a casket, you know. Leslie Keith I like very much, and I believe it is all for the best, dear. Your future happiness is my one aim—all I live for in fact. To ensure it I would forfeit anything. A time must arrive when I may be taken away from your side. Death would be robbed of all its sting in the knowledge that you were safely garnered in the home and heart of a good husband."

"Oh, papa! do not talk of leaving me," she sobbed. "It would break my heart to leave you, even a short time. You and I will always live together. I like Leslie, but I love you; we belong to each other. Tell him so."

"It would scarcely be kind to tell him his little sweetheart is crying because some day she will have to leave her dad," he said, tenderly. "It might make him jealous. These lovers are very exacting sometimes."

Only a little sighing sob escaped the quivering lips as he kissed and blessed her, and bade her good-night, fully satisfied that her affections had been won by Leslie Keith; her agitation and tears he ascribed to maidenly coyness and excitement.

"This is a surprise, indeed, Major!" Miss Carnegie observed, inauspiciously. "I hope dear Pearl has chosen one who will make her happy!"

"I have no doubt as to that. He is a most estimable young man. I have expressed to him my wishes not to take my pet away for a year. It will give them time and opportunity to become better acquainted. I am opposed to hurried marriages."

"I am so very pleased to hear it," she purred. "For I dreaded lest I should lose my charge, whom to know is to love."

"A year," he added, "is my only stipulation. In the meanwhile, my darling will have you to advise and counsel with in this important time of her young life."

"A year!" she mentally argued. "I had hoped to have been mistress of Waterchase long before that!" Aloud, she said softly, turning on him a pensive, but witching glance from her lustrous eyes, "I cannot express my gratitude to you for the great trust you have reposed in me. No mother could feel more anxious than I do now to influence dear Pearl, and guide her to the goal of her own felicity and happiness."

"The obligation is on mine and Pearl's side," he replied, courteously. "In fact, I may say candidly that I have felt easier in my mind ever since you made one of our household, for I began to feel my daughter was being sadly neglected. A lady's influence is always potent; an old fogey like me only spoils her. It wants tact and the tug of a silken rein to manage such skittish craft."

"I consider you very far from the fogey-class, Major," she murmured, slyly, thrusting forth a shapely silk-stockinged foot, in a pretty morose shoe, to catch his attention; "and as for old, I can scarcely realise dear Pearl is your daughter at times. The difference of age is certainly not on the surface."

He looked at her keenly, to see if this shrew was flattering him, but her face was on guard. It wore its most alluring smiles, and certainly did not betray its wily owner.

"I wish my feelings felt as fresh, then, as my face," he laughed, good-humouredly, perfectly convinced that Miss Carnegie was a most perfect specimen of womanhood. For where's the man of middle-age who can feel quite proof against the cunning flattery of a beautiful woman, much as he may vaunt his distaste for that kind of thing?

Pearl became an enigma to herself, for her heart leaped with delight when her lover bade her adieu to return to his duties in town. His watchful devotion fretted her. It seemed like a bondage, a loss of liberty, and she pined for her old untrammelled freedom of action.

She reproached herself for her coldness secretly, as he bent over her and said passionately,—

"My own Pearl, my dear one, you will not forget me while absent! You will try to ease for me a little more?"

A sadness crept into her tell-tale face, and she said softly,—

"Yes, I will try."

Then she smiled her farewell as he drove away, and the memory of the sweet sunny face dwelt in his mind. He felt perfectly easy and tranquil, and longed for the hour to arrive when he could return to his lady-love to recommence his wooing.

"I must try and love him," she argued to herself, as she left the window. "Papa likes him, Miss Carnegie likes him, and he is nice, ever so nice, and so clever. What a very perverse thing I must be not to care for anyone so admired and beloved."

While musing she ran right into the arms of her companion, as she was seeking her room.

"What, dreaming of that last good-bye kiss, Pearl, dear?" she remarked, playfully. "It will not be a year before the wedding-bells are set ringing. I venture to predict," twining her arms round the supple waist with beseeching affection.

"You are mistaken, then, for I intend to keep my freedom even longer than that. I cannot endure the thought of leaving papa. It doesn't seem right to desert him now that I am old enough to be some comfort to him. He is so unselfish and sacrificing that he will not confess how miserable and lonely he will feel when he is left alone. My happiness is paramount—the one object of his life."

"This is rather strange reasoning from a bride-elect!" interrupted Miss Carnegie, her face darkening, and biting her lips to repress the retort which sprang to them. "I mean for one who has just said good-bye to her fiancé, and whose kisses are still warm on her lips."

"I dare say I am totally different to other girls," she returned, with a sigh of regret, not noticing the baleful expression on Miss Carnegie's dark face. "You see I have never been brought up like other girls; I have always been papa's shadow. It was a thousand pities I wasn't a boy; I'm sure I should have copied him in everything, because I look upon him as being the incarnation of goodness, you see."

"This absurd worship, for I can give it no other term, my dear, must be quelled," she interposed, chidingly; "it will cause jealousy and trouble. You are no longer a child. If I speak a little sharply you will, I know, pardon me; it is my zeal for your real happiness."

"I am sure of it," Pearl returned, simply, giving her an affectionate kiss, and running up to her room to dress to take her father for their usual drive in her basket-carriage.

Her wonted cheerfulness returned as they rattled through the russet hedgerows strewn with morsels of straw, cast by the wind in fantastic loops; past the crimson glory of the belt

at copper benches by the old spinny just behind the blacksmith's forge, where the hammer going click-click was borne on the still air, and sounded rural and musical to Pearl, who loved this delightful little spot better than any mountain grandeur of far-off lands.

"Oh, look at that beautiful cloth of gold, dad!" she cried, gaily, pulling up and capturing a huge spray of bright red blossoms with the golden hock of her sunshade. "I will take these to Betsy Blunt. You won't mind waiting a minute, papa!" giving him a coaxing smile; "Invalde love a few flowers and a visit, even though it may be only a flying one."

Of course the Major gave his assent. When did he ever refuse this cherished idol anything it laid in his power to give or confer?

As they neared the Vicarage a sudden impulse seized Pearl to alight and make a call on Mrs. Vivian. She spun round her pair of ponies to the carriage gates in a perfectly dashing style, as a dog-cart came hurriedly out, resulting in a close shave for both drivers.

Pearl pulled back with all her might, so did the driver of the dog-cart, whose magnificent cob was fairly dragged on its haunches by the iron grip of its master, who saw the impending danger, and determined to avert it.

The Major became pale as death, and thrust his hand to his heart as if in pain, but breathed not a syllable lest he should unnervise poor Pearl in her strenuous efforts to prevent a catastrophe.

"Thanks, very many thanks!" Pearl exclaimed, gratefully, waving her hand to the gentleman. "Your presence of mind has saved us."

"And yours," he added, raising his straw hat, and revealing a grand head thickly clustered with chestnut hair; a regular rippling mass of sunny curls.

"How handsome!" she thought.

"What a sweet picture!" he murmured, his eyes involuntarily resting on the fair girl, who sat smiling radiantly now that all danger was over.

A swift blush rushed into her face as she met the earnest gaze of a pair of grey eyes bent upon her inquiringly, as if pained to know who the sweet owner of the basket-carriage could possibly be.

"You have saved us from a nasty spill," observed the Major, raising his hat in response. "Pray accept my grateful thanks on behalf of my daughter and myself."

Then the two gentlemen bowed, and the dog-cart passed out of sight just as Mrs. Vivian hastened down the steps with frightened face to greet her visitors.

"I trust you are not hurt?" she panted out. "I was so terribly alarmed for a moment. I lost all my usual nerve when I saw Sir Olive's dog-cart positively crashing into your dear little carriage."

"Oh! It was only fun!" laughed Pearl; "we were exhibiting our skill for your edification, Mrs. Vivian," shaking hands with the trembling matron, and springing out and patting her ponies carelessly.

"Sir Olive!" repeated the Major. "Was that Sir Olive Carlington, of Carlington Court?"

"Yes, the very same," assented Mrs. Vivian, leading her visitors into a delicious little drawing-room. "He only returned from abroad the day before yesterday, after an absence of nearly three years."

"I presume he is going to settle down and take up his position?"

"I fear not; he told the vicar he is only paying the Court a flying visit. I am so very disappointed, for he is a most charitable and large-hearted man. We can ill afford to spare such, especially as the winter draws nearer, and our poor are increasing in age and infirmities."

Pearl was listening mutely, and revolving in her mind if the lord of Carlington would fit away before they could call at the Court, in conformity with the usual custom in country towns and villages.

Mrs. Vivian ordered in tea, after which they both bade their hostess adieu, but not before Pearl called some asters, white as snowflakes,

and some starry jasmies to add to her golden glories, and fashioned them all into a pretty bouquet for the bed-ridden Betsy Blunt, whom she called upon on their return journey, trying her father's patience considerably by her long stay.

The principal topic at dinner was the meeting of Sir Olive Carlington.

"He is so handsome!" Pearl burst forth, enthusiastically. "I wish you could have seen him pull up his horse, Miss Carnegie. His wrists seemed to be made of iron, and his face to be marble in its intensity. Wasn't it, papa?"

"I should very much like to catch a glimpse of this gallant knight," she implored. "I hope you are not shaken, Major!" this with grave concern. "These daring exploits of dear Pearl's are a little too much for ordinary nerves."

"It was not the child's fault," he said loyally; "she is caution itself. It was pure accident, and only her brave courage saved us from a nasty breakdown."

Tact, which she was the mistress of, bade her change the subject, as she saw it was no use decrying Pearl's love of driving to the Major.

As soon as breakfast was over the next morning Pearl suggested they should both visit Carlington Court.

"It would seem so uncouth of us to let him go away without paying our respects, especially as we are his nearest neighbours," she argued.

He acquiesced, as he always did, in the end, and away she flew to don her prettiest costume in a perfect fever of delight—why, she couldn't have explained. She only knew that her dreams had been haunted by a noble, strong-purposed countenance, with a head covered with rings of soft brown hair that clustered round a broad forehead deeply tanned with Southern suns.

Her heart gave a bound of pleasure as the Baronet came forward to meet them, just as they entered the lodge gate, where they surprised him tracing a chubby little boy into mid-air, amid its shouts of delight, laughing himself at the urchin's wild glee.

Plump went the child into its mother's arms as Pearl and her father appeared on the scene.

"This is, indeed, a pleasure!" he said, shaking hands and bidding them welcome to the Court, and conducting them into the mansion with the free grace of an old friendship rather than a new one, and took them over the place which was a regular museum of curiosities, collected from every country by his art-loving ancestors.

"What treasures these are!" Pearl exclaimed, in a burst of admiration at some splendid paintings on porcelain that hung clustered in profusion in Sir Carlington's own den, as he termed it.

"They were painted by an artist in Florence who died," he replied, gravely; "they are perfect, are they not? May I offer you a couple?"

"It would be robbing you, Sir Olive!" she protested.

"It would give me more pleasure than I could say," he murmured, emphatically.

"It seems a pity to neglect so fine a property as this, Sir Olive!" remarked Major Marriot, joining them (he had been deeply interested in some coins of a very ancient date). "I trust it is not quite correct, this talk of your leaving!"

"I certainly had intended to do so. Man proposes, but—"

"We may conclude you have thought better of it," the Major added. "I am heartily glad to hear it; so is my daughter, I am sure, whose little head is crammed with schemes for the well-being of her pensioners, and sadly needs aid I know."

"And shall have it," he said, eagerly. "My purse is at your command, Miss Marriot. All I ask is to use it freely while I am here."

"Make hay while the sun shines, eh?" she laughed. "But suppose I have a long spell of sunshine, that our influence with the clerk of the weather," glancing up into his face with a

dash of coyness mixed with mischief, "should induce him to shiver all the winter through!"

"If I were that happy individual and you the pleader, doubtless the sun would never set on the homes of your pensioners until their needs had been relieved," he said, meaningly.

A rosy red flooded her face as their eyes met for an instant, and in shy confusion she lowered hers and changed the subject by inquiring where that funny spiral staircase led to.

"May I explore the rooms, Sir Olive?" she said, demurely.

He gave his consent, and away she darted trilling like a young hawk,—

"Upstairs, downstairs, and in my lady's chamber."

"Will you come, Major?" asked Sir Olive, looking after Pearl, with a yearning desire to join her.

"I must beg to be excused; my taste does not lie with cobwebs and dusty rooms. I'll amuse myself with the pictures for a few moments. I see you have some of the old masters in yonder room!"

"Oh! yes, several," assented the Baronet eagerly, bounding upstairs after Pearl, whom he found very busily employed adjusting the tail of a rocking-horse with pins.

"Never was old Rolypoly so highly honoured, Miss Marriot. That venerable fellow was your humble servant's first steed."

"Then this was your nursery, Sir Olive?" she returned. "How strange I should have found this room first!"

"Is it Kismet that brought you to the den where I lived under female despotism, I wonder?" he said softly, gazing at the pretty jewelled fingers pinning on the mangy-looking tail to the tough leather. Strange to relate, he felt it imperative on him to assist her, and there was a deal of confusion between the brown and white hands; they got mixed most unaccountably.

"You would not like to be a little boy again, I suppose!" she ventured to observe when Rolypoly was made tidy, and she stood looking out through the iron bars at the oak-dotted park below.

"If I had a fairy to mend my horses and my manners I dare be sworn I would."

"Then you would be a regular little old dotard of five that papa was reading about the other day," she retorted, archly; "a regular precocious marvel!"

"The marvel would be the fairy," he interposed; "not the urchin. They are plentiful enough. What do you say to trying the experiment of acting as the good fairy to this big boy? I'll promise to be very obedient and docile!" this in a half-comical, half-tender tone that sent Pearl into a fever of nervous flurry.

"I am sure you would try to be, Sir Olive," moving towards the door. "Papa will think the spiders have eaten us up if we delay any longer."

Away she flew—a veritable fairy in his eyes—for love had sent its magic arrow quivering into his heart for weal or woe.

"The light that lies in woman's eyes" had at last touched and quickened his very soul, filling it with new delights, which even he never dreamt the rosy god could bestow.

He had reached six-and-twenty with but a few youthful follies on his conscience, his tastes few wholly absorbed in the chase, the field, or hunting wild bores or tigers in the jungle. Woman had bored him after a few minutes' conversation.

"Pretty nonentities," he was wont to style them. "Paint, powder, and furbelows and hap-sid prattle!" His friends, in consequence, gave him the sobriquet of "Hermit."

The Major cordially proffered the hospitality of Waterchase, when, after a sumptuous luncheon, Sir Olive Carlington was compelled to let his visitors depart. The offer was, as may readily be guessed, eagerly accepted, and he was foolish enough to count the hours before he could, with etiquette, present himself at the shrine of all his earthly hopes.

The end of a month found him still at Broadstairs, revelling in draughts of elixir far more dangerous to him than anything of war with wild denizens of the jungle.

He knew but one real happiness—to be near

Pearl—to take furtive peeps at the glowing young face as he related many of his adventures to her father—to feel the stolid hardness of his former nature yielding under her gracious girlish influence—to bask in the sunshine of her innocent presence.

There was one inmate of the establishment he took a rooted antipathy to, try as hard as he could to overcome the feeling, the object of it being Miss Carnegie, whose dulcet, serpentine blandishments had no power over him.

"She puts me in mind of those Spanish women, who ensnare you by their artful wiles, then threaten you with their poignards if you wish to cast off your fetters. Ugh! she makes me shiver!" he mused, one delicious still October evening, between his whiffs of a particularly good cigar, as he leant on the terrace and gazed at the silver glimmer dancing on the calm sea, caused by the young moon, which shone out like a big diamond.

A sound of sweet music floated from the drawing-room. It was Pearl singing a quaint old English ballad, "The Ballad of the daughter of Iollington," one of her father's especial favourites.

In an instant he had flung away his cigar, and joined Pearl and the Major, who was playing chess with Miss Carnegie, her well-shaped arms bare to the elbow, the lace flatterer around them, adding to their beauty.

"Can we induce you to join us at draughts or chess?" asked the Major, "now you have finished your cigar?"

"No thanks, music before all," the Baronet returned, frankly.

"Pearl Marriot you mean," Miss Carnegie thought spitefully, making a false move in her jealousy to see so many men worship at this peony-faced child's feet, as she deemed her.

Song after song was sung, and the evening sped away, as others had done before it, leaving Sir Olive in a state of feverish hope, mingled with keen pain, which he could not shape into words. One fact would stare him in the face—a settled reputation on Pearl's part to be alone with him ever since that first morning she brightened the old nursery with her presence.

She positively seemed to shrink from him, as if with fear. Yet her brown eyes would sparkle with fun and happiness when he sat near her while in the society of others.

"This uncertainty is unbearable," he argued, as he strode back to his lonely bachelor home one evening. "Is there someone else in the field?" Great drops of perspiration bedewed his forehead at the fearful thought. "Oh, no! it would have leaked out! I must have heard it! Ill news always flies apace; but this suspense must be stopped, or I shall go wild! I'll put matters to the test to-morrow! This is cruel torture!"

With this resolve he made himself somewhat easier, and contrived to sleep part of the night—a rare event for him since Pearl had dawned upon his life to fill it with ecstatic bliss one moment, and the throes of miserable torment the next.

She, poor child, was loyal and true indeed to Leslie Keith, though her heart rebelled. Every week she wrote a long budget of their doings, not omitting the visits of Sir Olive Carington.

"He is a very nice neighbour, so charitable and kind to the poor," she said at the close of one of her letters. "Papa is quite attached to him, and I am sure you will like him too!"

After that brief allusion to their new acquaintance no more was said. Somehow she found it rather difficult to write about him or his charitable works.

Miss Carnegie's sharp eyes had not been idle. She easily detected how matters stood with Sir Olive, and determined to take Pearl to task before a crisis occurred.

"All my plans will be crushed if this marriage with Keith is broken off," she muttered, anxiously. "My one aim must be to hasten it, or the Major will slip through my fingers, for Sir Olive hates me in his heart. I can read it in his face; he suspects something. Can he ever have known me in the past?" (here she shivered in very terror).

"Faugh! I'm simply childishly ridiculous, conjuring up spectres that were laid years ago!"

"What will you sell your thoughts for, *ma chère*!" she said, sweetly, later on that afternoon, coming across Pearl curled up on a window seat, a book of poems lying idly on her lap.

A conscious flush dyed her cheeks as she met the basilisk gaze of her companion.

"I—I was lost. I mean I was not thinking of anything in particular," she stammered, rising and taking hold of her neglected book, as if to commence reading.

"Are you quite sure, dear Pearl?" she persisted, "that a gentleman wasn't the theme of your thoughts you term as lost? I fancy I have found them" (she significantly). "Shall I name the gentleman?"

"No—oh, no!" pleaded poor Pearl, all of a tremble, for her own conscience accused her, and in her simplicity she believed Miss Carnegie really had probed her guilty secret.

"Why 'oh no'!" she asked, tantalizingly, "if they were good thoughts, but I fear they were a little bit mixed, that a certain gentleman who was here last evening figured principally in them in place of the absent lover!"

"No—oh, no!" murmured Pearl crouching down in her corner and trying to hide her burning face in the folds of the heavy curtain. "Please do not tease me, Carnegie dear," this impudently.

"I wish it were in my power to obey you," she continued, "but I dare not. You are standing on a precipice, and I feel it my duty to warn you before dire trouble follows, which it surely will unless you drop flirting with Sir Olive Carington!"

"How dare you say such a wicked thing!" she exclaimed, angrily. All her gentleness fled at the coarse unwomanly way of attack. "It is false, I never flirted with Sir Olive!"

Then she burst into a torrent of tears. This open revolt was very terrifying to her tormentress, whose position in the household was not quite so secure as to enable her to offend its young mistress.

"You misunderstand me, dear child," she answered, tenderly. "I would not wound your feelings for the world. You ought to know me better than that by this time. Why, the term flirt is used in fun, badinage, what you will. We all flirt. I flirt!" (this gushingly). "Of course I do, with any of the irresistible males who are harmless. What I wished to convey to that dear little sensitive head was to be cautious, just a wee bit. For instance, plead an excuse when Sir Olive asks you to sing an especial song, and oppose so many of his visits. Suggest to papa that he bores you."

"That would be false, because I like his society," she retorted.

"Did I not say so just now when you became so fierce, *ma chère*!"

"Liking anyone is not flirting with them. I detest the name; it is an insult to utter it to one who never deserved it. I hold the girl who deserves it unworthy even the respect of her own sex."

"You misinterpret the term altogether, dear, but we must not split straws over quibbles. Only be a trifle guarded, lest we make a certain gentleman jealous when he comes to feast his eyes on his little fiancée."

Like a wise tactician she dropped the subject, seeing it was a particularly sore one with her charge, determining to watch closely, and use all her arts to entrap the Major by some bold coup.

CHAPTER IV.

SIR OLIVE'S resolve to put matters to a test, once conceived, was carried out in swift haste, for his heart hungered to reveal its store house of love to the one who had awakened it.

Armed with a spray of orange blossom, culled from one of the conservatories, he made his way to Waterchase, with the intention of using it as a little trap to catch the jewel he coveted.

"What a delightful little spray!" she exclaimed, as he offered it for her acceptance. "And an orange and all. I will keep the orange as a curiosity. I never saw one growing in England before!"

"Take the giver with it," he pleaded, in a low tremulous voice, that shook with the intensity of its passion. "Those flowers will fade and die, and so will my heart, if you do not have compassion on me."

The impassioned flood of words was poured forth so hurriedly that Pearl stood dazed for a brief minute, not knowing whether to fly from his side, or avow the bitter truth now that Sir Olive had spoken those burning words of love—words that were engraven in letters of fire on her heart, and, Heaven help her, more precious than any and all she had received from the man who was her affianced husband.

"Why do you shrink from me?" he asked, catching hold of her hands, and looking at the blanched face which gazed at him in mute, tearless agony.

"I am too late," he gasped in despair.

"Pity me," she implored, piteously.

He dropped her hands, and covered his face, with one low cry of pain.

White as marble she stood, not daring to raise her eyes, to even offer one grain of solace to that storm-driven soul that was fighting its grim battle with self.

"Would to Heaven I had known it before," he groaned. "All is lost!—all is lost!" and he staggered to a chair, and buried his face in his hands, as if to shut out the light of day.

"Can you ever forgive me?" she murmured. "Would that I could bear all the pain. Oh, that we had never met!"

"I am a weak fool," he said, tremulously. "Heaven help me, but I loved you so, and I was mad enough to think no man lived who could keep you from me. Oh, my love!—my love! It is I who must ask for pardon for being too sanguine. You are blameless. On me rests the burden and the blame," and with these words he rose and groped his way out of her presence like an inebriate.

Her first impulse was to follow him to offer consolation. A piteous little cry escaped her parched lips, and in the anguish of hopeless despair she flung herself down on the floor and sobbed bitter, heart-burning tears.

There Miss Carnegie found her, to her astonishment. A few minutes after the hall door closed with a bang, and the distracted Baronet fled from all he prized on earth for honour's sake.

"In Heaven's name tell me what has happened?" Miss Carnegie exclaimed. "Are you ill? Speak, Pearl! Shall I call your papa?"

"No; let me be in peace, in mercy's name," she moaned, "my heart is bursting!"

"Sir Olive has been here. I was dressing when he arrived, and he has gone," she said, in grave tones. "He has offended you? Why did you not take my timely warning?"

"Sir Olive is a king among men," she cried, fiercely, rising up and confronting her questioner defiantly. "He has not offended me; he would not hurt or offend even one of Heaven's lowliest creatures."

Then her mood changed to a remorseful one for showing such ingratitude to one who she felt was only advising her for her own good.

"Bear with me, Carnegie, dear," she wailed forth, burying her tear-stained face in her bosom; "I am so wretched. If it were not for dear papa I could almost wish I were dead."

"Why, what is all about?"

"I must never tell you or anyone as long as I live."

"Then there must be some terrible secret you fear to disclose," she said maliciously, her eyes dancing with wicked triumph.

"Have some pity, and forbear torturing me with unfounded suspicions," she urged, plaintively. "My sorrow is surely sufficient."

"But why not confide in me?" she wheedled "or your father?"

"It would break his heart," Pearl sobbed. "He believes me so happy, and my life is a wicked lie."

"I can see it all. What I guessed has really come to pass. You have played with fire, and have come out scathed."

"For Heaven's sake do not betray me!" she besought. "I fought, oh, so hard, against this

love, and thought I had won till he came, and—
 "Asked you to be his wife," added Miss Carnegie.

"I never said so. Do not seek to know what it is not in my power to tell," forgetting, poor girl, in her agitation, that she was revealing everything. "I am the plighted wife of Leslie, and I must be worthy of the name I bear and his, which will one day be mine. Papa would spurn me if I became a jilt, a heartless flirt. Oh, no! I will be true, if you will assist me and keep my secret."

"If you promise to give up seeing Sir Clive, and hasten your marriage," she said, guardedly. "Your future is at stake, therefore I must insist upon you obeying me so far."

"I'll promise anything," she said, at random, "only be true to me!"

With light-drawn lips, that had no sympathy or pity for this young motherless girl, whose whole heart was teeming with noble thoughts and aspirations, whose one craving was to save pain by even sacrificing self, she gave the required assurance, enjoining her victim to obey her mandate—marry before the year expired, as commanded by her father.

With lagging, weary steps she then gained her room to leave her tear-swollen face, so as to appear bright and fresh before her father.

"Reynolds says Sir Clive has been here, my dear!" her father observed, after that stately individual had departed with the cloth. "Did you see him?"

Miss Carnegie was cracking a walnut, and waited breathlessly for her answer.

"Yes, papa; but he was in a hurry."

"Rather unusual for him. What induced him to come then? Did he want to see me?"

"I think not, papa. I—I told him you were engaged with your lawyer."

"What a foolish fellow to run off just because I was busy for a few minutes. The fact is he was nervous at being left alone with two ladies," he said, merrily, quite unconscious of the pain he was inflicting upon Pearl.

The next news they heard was the sudden departure of Sir Clive for London, causing amazement to the Major.

"What an extraordinary fellow he is to run off without a word! His father was considered eccentric, and the son is following in his footsteps," he grumbled somewhat petulantly, for he had taken a liking for the genial Baronet's society, and began to look upon it as a settled arrangement to have his daily or evening visits.

This change threw him more into the company of the wily companion of an evening, for Pearl took the first opportunity after desert to escape to her retreat, leaving the field open to the enemy, and, most remarkable to relate, these absences were not even noticed, for the blaudishments of Miss Carnegie entirely absorbed the Major, who was now completely convinced that she was the incarnation of all womanly virtue and beauty.

She it was who poured out his coffee and put the sugar and cream in it to suit his taste, and wheeled his chair to the davenport, gave him his letter-case and ink-stand. Thus far had she ousted his child from her rightful position.

He, poor deluded man, never suspected any treachery; he noticed Pearl was rather pale and thin; but Miss Carnegie laughingly observed that engaged girls generally pined a little when their lovers were forced to be away from them.

Christmas arrived, bringing with it Leslie Keith and a present for his little sweetheart, as he always called her.

Pearl twisted the costly bracelet listlessly round her arm which lacked the plumpness it possessed when he bade her love him a little more that September morning.

"You have not given me a kiss or said if you like it, and I thought it would please you so much," he said, anxiously.

"It is too beautiful," she murmured, lowering her eyes; "too costly."

"Nothing can be too costly for you, Pearl. It was my ambition to have this bracelet made of pearls, intending to give it to you the day you gave your sweet self to me; then my impatience to see it on your arm, to watch the surprise and

pleasure from those starry eyes spoil my plan. What it is to be impetuous!"

"You are too kind," she murmured, with a little sickly effort to smile.

"I suppose I shall have the pleasure of seeing this neighbour Pearl mentioned in her letters," he remarked, as they all sat in front of the drawing-room fire at afternoon tea, presided over now by Miss Carnegie.

Pearl had become so listless and languid that she gladly yielded the point.

"I regret to tell you the bird has flown," the Major rejoined. "He came in a hurry and took himself off like a meteor. There's no accounting for these rovers, they never seem to settle down."

"He was a very nice fellow, wasn't he?" pursued Keith.

"A splendid fellow, first-rate company, up in everything," acquiesced Major Marriot.

"What a shame these dear fellows will run away," whispered a gushing young lady, a Miss Slater, to Mrs. Vivian, who was regarding Pearl with motherly concern, noting how transparent and fragile she had become.

"Perhaps they are wise, who shall say!" replied the vicar's wife mechanically.

"Do you mean that I am dangerous, dear Mrs. Vivian?" she said, demurely.

"You certainly are not;" that lady answered.

"Why, there could not be a more harmless little person where Sir Clive is concerned; he is a confirmed bachelor, you know."

"I think him odious then," Miss Slater laughed.

Poor Pearl sat mute by the side of her betrothed, her hands locked in silent agony beneath a huge fan Miss Carnegie bade her hold to screen the fierceness of the fire from her face, forced to listen to the commonplace chatter about one whom she loved dearer than life.

That evening's post brought a sealed registered letter addressed to Miss Marriot, with the Carington crest. She turned pale as death when Reynolds, the butler, handed it to her, and her hand trembled so that she could scarcely retain her hold when she saw the well-known coat of arms.

"We will excuse you, my dear," her father said, cheerily. "I expect it is another Christmas gift."

"It is from Sir Clive Carington," she managed to gasp out, as she broke the seal; then in a few seconds she resumed; "he has sent me one hundred pounds to distribute among my pensioners, and a hundred blankets are at the Court waiting for me to give out."

"What a capital fellow he is! It's a thousand pities he will not settle down," broke in the Major. "But hasn't he sent any message to us after cutting off so unceremoniously?"

"Only his very best wishes for our health and happiness this festive season—nothing more, papa."

The matter then dropped, for Pearl set about her task at once. It seemed to put new life into her to have something to do for his sake. Each banknote was kissed and cried over, and the envelope bearing his inscription placed in her bosom as a most precious gift—more precious than a dozen pearl bracelets in her opinion.

Old and young had a high old time of it round and about Broadstairs. Warm gowns, jackets, and coats had already been supplied by Pearl and the vicar's wife, and a few other ladies.

Sir Clive's money was all expended in beef, pork, mutton, tea, raisins, and other comforts. The poor were made happy, and grateful hearts blessed the sweet giver together with the absent Lord of Carington Court.

A large dinner-party assembled round the sumptuous board at Waterchase on Christmas Day; all were merry and good-humoured with themselves, and the world in general.

What mattered it to these well-favoured ones that a cruel east wind blew raw rashes against the frosted window panes, tearing at the bare branches viciously, whistling and moaning like a demon storm fiend. They were safely housed, where wine and honey flowed unalimited.

There was one in that gay party whose heart was sore, notwithstanding the animated scene. Her thoughts strayed to the wanderer, whose love had driven him forth, miserable and lonely.

"I wish I could cure the lily whiteness of your cheeks, miss! It's downright aggravating, it is!" grumbled Kitty, as she fastened sprays of holly in the flowing white satin robes, a gift from her father.

"You will have to be satisfied with my cheeks as they are, Kitty," her mistress said, with a smile. "You have not told me what you think of papa's present yet."

"Why, it's the beautifullest dress I ever clapped eyes on. It's just like a bride's, miss; and now I come to think of it, so are you—just that melancholy, pale look brides always have!"

"Your description is rather vague, Kitty. You are a very original girl!"

"I'm sure I mean no offence, miss," this sheepishly, being fearful lest she had angered her mistress.

"It is rather refreshing to hear your opinions. You know I dislike flattery. By-the-way, I suppose you saw Sam Blunt this morning? Did he say where his master was when he last wrote to him?"

"Oh! yes, miss! He said he was a staying at some great hotel somewhere near a park!"

"Then he did not say if he was coming back to the Court?" trying to appear unconcerned.

"Not a word—leastways not as Sam knows. He said that he should want Sam to be ready to start for foreign parts very soon, and Sam is awfully put out about it," this with a conscious blush.

"You see it's rather hard on us just as we have begun courting and all, and he is the nicest young man I ever knew in my life, miss."

"Sweethearts generally are!" Pearl observed, smilingly; "and Sam is a very nice young man, I am sure, or his master would not repose such trust in him; but there goes the second bell. I must hasten. Fasten my shoes quickly, there's a good Kitty."

"You look lovely, little sweetheart!" whispered Leslie; "the white gown suits you to perfection. I should like to paint you just as you are as the Queen of Christmas," taking her in his arms, and kissing the snowy brow. "Pearl, give me one kiss, darling! Just a little Christmas kiss!" he added, pleadingly.

She shrunk away from his embrace with a scared look in her pretty eyes like a stag brought to bay, and pulled the berries off her dress mechanically.

"Why are you always so coy, dear one, when we are alone? I shall have a long score against you when you are my wife!" he said, ardently; "and I mean to be paid in full!"

"Papa is calling. Let me go, Leslie," she pleaded; and she flitted away—a white, shining figure, leaving a soft perfume behind her.

"How cold she is!" he said to himself, with a little pang of wounded vanity. "I wish I could infuse a little warmth into her nature. What a contrast to merry Agnes Slater, with her tantalising, affectionate manners."

Pearl's shy reserve had just commenced to pique Leslie Keith, who could not long endure her passive conduct without annoyance.

It seemed incredible to his understanding that she could receive all his fervent little speeches and lover's endearments, and yet remain cold and unyielding; he, the spoilt darling of society, the lion of fashionable little at-homes in Mayfair and South Kensington, where women hung upon his every sentence with breathless interest when he expatiated upon the artistic merits of the latest fashionable picture or poem, &c. &c.

That evening, and many which followed, he devoted himself in desperation to Agnes Slater, vying with her, and guided her pencil in filling in a beech-tree; but all this seeming interest had not the slightest effect upon Pearl, who appeared relieved at the respite from his too fervent attentions.

Gaieties succeeded in quick succession with the new year, the last affair being a dance in honour of Pearl's birthday.

"I wish this to be the gayest of all our gatherings, dear Miss Carnegie," Major Marriot said, animatedly (it had come to dear Miss Carnegie now).

"I will write the invitations at once," she replied, sweetly, tapping the brass dogs with her scarlet slipper, and smiling at him with eyes and lips in a bewildering fashion that sent his pulses throbbing with a nameless thrill of exquisite pleasure. "Will you help me, Major, as Pearl is engaged more agreeably!" this with playful *matelid*.

"I doubt whether they feel happier in their young love's dream than I when—er—when—that is—"

Here he became sadly mixed. The fact was her witchery had dazzled him to such an extent that he nearly lost his reasoning faculties for a brief moment.

"Your words make me very happy, too," she said, softly, "for they bid me hope that I have had something to do with your feelings. Am I not right?"

"Yes, you have brought peace, and taken a load of care off my shoulders, as well as brightening our home with your gracious presence. I cannot realise what we should do without you," he returned, warmly.

"Dear Pearl will soon learn to forget me," she sighed, "when she leaves this dear old roof tree, and poor me will be cast among strangers again, to dream only of the past joys never to be renewed. But there, it is ever so in this fateful life's fever; meetings and partings from those we love" (this, with a little dry sob that she was an adept in bringing to her aid when the occasion demanded). "But there, I am a sentimental, foolish creature, I can only crave your indulgence, dear Major."

"Your sweet womanly feelings do you honour. I admire you more for them; but do not, I beg, talk of leaving us, as we cannot spare you."

"You forget my services will not be required by my charge when she becomes a wife!"

"I forget nothing," he answered, impetuously. "Waterchase must have a mistress; it would be a wilderness without you. No, I cannot permit you to leave Waterchase."

"I must obey then!" she simpered. "Your wishes are my law," going over to the davenport, and commencing to write the delicate pink invitation missives for the forthcoming ball; and, looking up archly, she added, "you are leaving me to do all the work."

"How remiss I am," he rejoined, briskly, taking the opposite side and setting to energetically to assist her. "I was dreaming."

"Of the future or the past?" she questioned. "Both; somehow they will continually get mixed," he said, sadly.

"I'll take particular care that the past does not influence my future," she said, mentally. "I am virtually mistress of Waterchase, it only requires a little diplomacy to be mistress in reality. You are cautious, as old birds generally are, but no match for Thyra Carnegie."

Further conversation was stopped by the entrance of Pearl, who, at the Major's request, gave her help in sending out the notes. Very soon a few other stragglers joined them, and offered their services, so that pens were scratching away furiously for half an hour.

Lights, music, flowers, sweet odours, silvery laughter, mingled with the patter of fairy feet, and chief and daintiest of all stood out the queen of the revels, clad in a white gown, looped with aliver, a thread of fine pearls round her fair young throat.

"I am going to claim the privilege of your *fancet*, Pearl, and open the ball with you," whispered Keith, as she descended the stairs, where he was waiting anxiously to catch her, before she entered the brilliant throng of human butterflies.

"Must I open the ball!" she answered simply, averting her eyes from his searching glances.

"You are the star of to-night's revels, sweetheart, and my queen. I mean to claim my rights, and take as many dances as the law of lovers permits," looking at her programme, and jostling his initials down rapidly.

"Really, Leslie, it is too bad!" she protested feebly. "You are appropriating them all. You forget I am not a teetotum!"

"I am going to be covetous. What you do

not care to dance we will sit out"—this was said in a tone of authority he had never asserted before.

Pearl was besieged with a host of admirers, each of them pleading for only one dance, much to Keith's amusement now that he had monopolised nearly all in the evening's programme by a bold coup.

"If I could only escape from this bondage," Pearl sighed, retreating behind the silk curtains after a while. "Oh, how I despise myself. Oh, my love, my lost love! why did we ever meet! I was happy with my lot, and knew not what love meant. Now life is all a mockery. If I could only feel the clasp of those dear arms and lie my weary head on your breast, I think I should be content."

Tears bedewed her brown eyes as she conjured up that last bitter yet sweet meeting.

The casement was half open to admit the air into the crowded room; and feeling feverish and heated she stepped out on the terrace to cool her throbbing temples, when, lo! the very man she had been apostrophising stood before her, to her utter amazement.

For a brief instant she thought it was his shadow, raised by a heated imagination.

"Pearl, my beloved!" he whispered, "I have waited to catch one glimpse of you to-night as I leave England. I know I should see you. My heart told me my visit would not be in vain."

"Why did you not come as a guest?" she faltered, her eyes sparkling, her whole frame quivering with joy.

"You ask me that! Oh! Pearl! my heart's only love! You little know the fire which rages in my nature when I even think of another man claiming you, whom my very soul craves for. I dare not trust myself near you and this man, lest I should do him some mischief. You asked pity from me; I now implore pity from you. I have wrestled against this love as a strong man might a deadly pestilence, only to find myself vanquished."

"Pity you! Oh! Oliver, my very heart bleeds for your suffering—nay, more, it throbs now in unison with all you have told me!"

Then his arms clasped the willowy figure in a moment of rhapsody to his breast, and the little head, with its wreath of white roses, lay in blissful contentment where it had longed to rest, while the silvery moon shed its brightest gleams upon the pair, and requite rapture filled their very souls.

"I must go now, Olive," she pleaded, getting alarmed lest her absence should be noticed by the lynx-eyed Miss Carnegie; her maidenly fears battling with her love.

"Give me one kiss; it is not a sin yet!" he replied, hoarsely. "When next we meet I will tempt you, for you will be a wedded wife. It will be the first and last; the memory will have to cheer me in the dreary future which, for henceforth, will be aimless."

He felt her soft arms round his neck—her glowing face pressed against his—her loving eyes lifted to his, full of a liquid light, that thrilled every vein within him.

"Heaven in its mercy bless you, my darling, and pardon me for this!" he murmured, as he pressed a long, burning kiss on the dewy lips, and untwined her arms from their clasp.

Half dazed she clasped the stone balustrade for support as he passed from her sight, groping his way like one intoxicated with wine.

"Gone!" she gasped in despair, clutching her white fur wrap round her shivering form. The gaunt bare branches of the trees seemed to echo her words, and repeat them in weird, mocking gusts.

"Gone!" she sobbed again. Then she dragged her tired limbs into the room, her face all pale and tear-stained, and in a panic of fear lest someone should see her in this sorrowful plight.

"Where have you been, my pet!" asked her father, catching sight of her as she had nearly gained the door. "Leslie has been disconsolate about you!"

"The room was hot, and I went to the window for air, papa," she managed to reply, not daring to raise her face to his lest he should see its piteous suffering.

"I will send Miss Carnegie to you, dear. She will know what to give you to brighten you up."
"No, please, don't," she said, quickly. "I am all right, papa. I only need a few moments' rest. Do not send her. You will not, will you?"

"Certainly not, my child, if you can dispense with her," wondering at her earnestness; but putting it down to the waywardness of youth.

When she again joined the dancers all trace of her mental strife was erased, the only difference being that her face was paler, and the pensive expression round her mouth intensified.

"I shall carry you away to sunny Italy when we are married. This climate is too cold and cheerless for you, sweetheart!" Keith whispered, as he led her from the maze of a waltz, half-fainting, to a secluded nook, placed her on a couch, and procured some port wine, and insisted upon her drinking it. "I had no idea you were so weak, or I would not have persuaded you to dance. You do believe me!"

"Yes, oh, yes!" she answered. "I know you are very kind. I am not very strong. It was a sudden giddiness; the heat and excitement, I suppose, were the cause."

"It will be anything but bliss for me if my wife gets pale and faint whenever she goes into society," he thought, gloomily, his selfishness overwhelming his affection, delicate women not being to his taste.

"I must ask the Major to bring you up to town to one of the most eminent physicians," he said, aloud. "This lassitude worries me!"

"I will not see any doctor," she protested, vehemently, her cheeks flushing with indignation at the tone of command he assumed. "My health is all right. Papa must not be worried needlessly."

Her words puzzled and disturbed him, for he realised now that he had gained the heiress, or rather the casket he coveted; but the jewel seemed still far from his reach.

"I fear I have been too precipitate," he thought, later on that night. "There are other girls as pretty, and as rich, to be had with a little patience. I fancy I am sacrificing myself for a ridiculous whim, to a pretty piece of statuary. It's confoundedly unpleasant, to say the least of it."

While he was communing with self, and his betrothed was musing upon the soul-stirring events on the terrace, another little comedy was being enacted by her father and Miss Carnegie.

The Major, now completely caught in the toils of the siren, became an easy prey, as she wisely calculated upon, only waiting the opportunity, which came quicker than even she imagined.

"I am terribly distressed about my poor little Pearl," he said, joining her when his daughter left him to obliterate the traces of her tear-stained face. "She is strangely altered of late; I cannot understand it."

"Why alarm yourself needlessly!" she replied, soothingly. "Lovers will have their little differences; at least, so I have heard."

"Then you ascribe this alteration to lovers' quarrels?"

"And a wee bit of caprice," she added.

He was much relieved by her calm answer, thinking how stately and beautiful she looked, her pearl-grey silk dress floating in soft folds around her, the rich crimson ascleas in her dusky hair heightening the full florid beauty of her handsome face.

"You could subdue this if you would," he urged. "Will you, for my sake?"

"Had I the rights of a mother I probably might influence her," she replied, boldly, determined to bring matters to a crisis by one audacious move on the board.

"Perhaps you are right," he said, after a pause.

"She is very high-spirited, and no doubt ignores the advice of those whom she deems have no real authority over her. It is not her fault, poor child! I am the one to blame for being so lax with her at a time when the reins should have been held firmly; but it is not too late to repair the error if you will become my wife!" taking her hand, and lifting it to his lips in the gallant fashion of a past generation that would be well for the men of the present day to copy.

"I have no family connections or money to fit me for such a position," she said, with seeming humility. "What will your friends say, dear Major? They may accuse me of all kinds of terrible things."

"I care not for the opinions of my neighbours, or so-called friends; my dear child's happiness and welfare comes first, mine afterwards. You have, in my estimation, all I need. Wealth I do not require; a loving heart, which I know you possess, is the only gift I wish. Will you grant the boon I ask?"

"Yes," she murmured, completely elated at the success of her plans, "if you think I shall make you happy."

The Major, of course, gave her to understand it would bring no end of bliss to them all, being very much enamoured by her enchantment.

It was early dawn when she sought her pillow, not the least fatigued, notwithstanding what she had passed through; excitement and exultant triumph took all sleep from her eyes.

She changed her flowing silk robes for a crimson wrapper adorned with soft swans-down, brushed out her wealth of jetty hair, and contemplated her olive face with rapt satisfaction.

"I wonder if the old dotard really cares for me!" she soliloquised, with a cruel smile, "or if he simply admires me, as he would a fine horse, a picture, or other chattel?"

Then she took from a leather dressing bag a little silver locket, touched the spring, and gazed long and tenderly at the portrait of a man with a dark, Italian face of exceeding beauty.

"Poverty versus love!" she muttered, a softness stealing into her eyes. "Love must wait; but why?" as a brilliant idea struck her. "What is to hinder us from being re-united when this house is mine? I am free to invite whom I like. You shall be the first guest, and the most honoured one. Riches will be mine; you, my own Leo, shall share them as we did the sordid poverty."

Locking the miniature up securely, a sudden impulse possessed her to go and see if Pearl was asleep, to reveal her triumph and her new position in the household.

(Continued on page 496)

MY SWEETHEART.

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CHAPTER X.X.

It was a moment of intense excitement to Paula. She dreaded beyond words the horrible moment that Gregor Thorpe must turn towards her and look upon her face.

If he knew her, detection and disgrace must follow.

A great temptation came over her to spring to her feet suddenly and fly out of the opera-box; but even as the thought passed through her mind they turned towards her, and, as they stood between her and the door, all opportunity for flight was cut off.

At last the dreaded moment came. After saluting the strangers the old banker had presented them to Miss Dawes, then he turned to her.

Paula never afterwards had a clear recollection of how the presentation was made. As she slowly raised her terrified eyes, the two young gentlemen were bowing before her—Gregor Thorpe looking at her with startled gaze that caused the blood to fairly stand still in her veins.

Ah, Heaven! did he recognise her? With easy, careless grace he took the vacant chair beside her, much to the discomfort of the young artist, whom courtesy forced to make himself agreeable to Miss Dawes.

Gregor talked pleasantly of the opera, and he quite believed that the girl's almost inaudible replies were occasioned by bashfulness, and he furthest looking directly into her face again; but at that first glance he had indeed been startled at her great resemblance to beautiful Paula Garstin. Then he grew provoked at himself as the fancy grew upon him.

What had this fair young beauty, with eyes as blue as violets, and hair like spun gold, with diamonds shining like a crimson flame around her white throat, in common with poor pretty Paula Garstin, the little work-girl, who had probably paid the forfeit of her life for an afternoon of pleasure?

"Come," said the artist, at length, touching him on the arm; "the curtain is about to rise, we had better return to our box."

Thorpe rose and followed him, after making his adieu; but he groped his way along like a man stunned with strong delicious wine.

Frank Belmore noticed it.

"You thought yourself invulnerable, Thorpe, my boy," he said, with a sneering laugh; "but you find that there is no armour so thick, so heavy that Cupid's arrows cannot pierce it. You went down like a shot at the first glance of Miss Barton's bright eyes. I have always noticed that the men who declare themselves impervious to love are the first to succumb to it."

"You are greatly mistaken if you think that I am interested in Miss Barton," said Gregor, earnestly—more earnestly than the occasion required.

But during all the rest of the evening his friend noticed that Gregor was like a man suddenly bewitched.

The opera no longer had the least charm for him. He sat with his eyes riveted on Mr. Barton's box, drinking in every detail of the beautiful young face, with its halo of golden hair so clearly outlined against the hangings of dark rich crimson velvet.

All that night in his dreams Gregor Thorpe saw the fair, girlish, witching face before him, and his waking thoughts were of Mr. Barton's sweet young granddaughter the moment he opened his eyes, and from that moment he was the most miserable of men, for he realised that he could have loved her—poured all the affection of his heart at her feet. Ah, yes, he could have loved her, but he must not; for was he not the affianced husband of another?

Gregor remembered to have heard pretty Miss Barton say that she intended visiting the flower show the following day, and he never quite knew how it happened, but he found himself there also; and the thought was rushing like a delirium through his brain, should he catch a glimpse of her there—just one fleeting glimpse of her lovely face?

Yes, she was there, looking lovelier than ever, and his heart beat high with pleasure as he caught her eye, and she blushed and smiled.

Gregor had told himself that he would never seek her presence again, for there was danger for him in being by her side; but at that enchanting smile from those perfect red lips all his good resolutions failed; he made his way toward her at once.

The hour that they spent together amid the rose-blossoms was to him a perfect dream, and he was annoyed when Miss Dawes announced to her pretty charge that it was time to go.

"There is to be a ball at Mrs. Archer's to-night," murmured the girl. "Do you know them?"

"Yes," returned Gregor; "and I have received an invitation to the self same ball. Will you be there?"

"I would not miss it for the whole world! It will be the greatest event of my life, for it is my first ball," she declared, with bright eyes and flushed cheeks.

"Then I will be there," he answered in a voice that was not quite steady.

He placed her in her carriage, and watched the vehicle until it was lost to sight, and then he turned away with a sigh.

"How beautiful she is!" he murmured, huskily. "But what madness it is for me to sun myself in her presence. She is not for me; the fates have forbidden it, that's certain."

With a start he remembered that he had told Mildred that he intended coming early to see her that afternoon, and that he would be there when she returned home.

He found her standing at the gate, watching for him.

When he saw her he quickened his pace.

"You are late, Gregor," she said, gently, as

she held out her hand to him. "What kept you?"

He did not think of deceiving her.

"I went to the flower show, Mildred," he answered, "and time flew swift-winged by me. Ah, the roses were superb!"

She looked up at him with a beautiful smile on her noble face.

"How did it happen, Gregor, that you did not bring me a few roses? You know how dearly I love flowers. I should have been so pleased. Did—did you not think of it?"

His face flushed, and he looked at her uneasily.

"I will tell you the truth, Mildred," he said, huskily. "It did not occur to me. If you like, I will return now and purchase the finest roses I can find. I shall have plenty of time before it closes."

"No, no!" she answered, hurriedly; "never mind. The next time you go you may remember to bring me some."

"I will indeed, Mildred," he declared, earnestly. "Aren't you coming into the house, Gregor?"

She asked in surprise, noting that he made no attempt to unlatch the gate.

"Will you excuse me if I do not remain this evening, Mildred?" he asked, hesitatingly, and in evident embarrassment.

She looked up at him quickly, her wistful face paling a little.

"Of course if you ask I must consent, for you know best, Gregor," she answered, trying to speak carelessly to hide the deep disappointment in her heart. She could have sobbed aloud, she felt so badly.

His visits were the greatest joy she had ever known. She looked forward to them from time to time with an expectancy so eager it frightened even herself. She only lived in his presence, and the hours she spent with him were the brightest she had ever known in all her desolate young life.

She was so happy if they only sat in the same room, if she breathed the same air as he did, if she was near him.

This was the first time he had ever asked to break an engagement with her, and the words struck her with a cold chill at her heart; but, as most loving women are wont to do, she found herself making excuses for him.

Of course it must be some pressing business of importance that he wished to transact, and a lover never confided such matters to his sweetheart; so she must not ask him about it, she thought.

"You are very good to let me go, Mildred," he murmured. "I hope you will not miss me or be lonely."

"I shall try not to be," she answered, brightly. "No doubt I can find something to do to pass the time away."

"You may expect me to-morrow, Mildred," he said.

Her face beamed with pleasure.

"Good night, Mildred," he said, holding out his hand to her.

"Good-night, Gregor," she answered, sweetly. He turned and walked swiftly down the street, and the girl watched him with her eyes suffused with tears.

"How noble and good my lover is," she murmured. "He has some business engagement, and he has come all the way down here to excuse himself to me that I might not be watching for him disappointedly this evening. Ah, how thoughtful he is!" and Mildred walked slowly up to the little porch with a smile on her lips.

She sat on the low step of the porch until the stars came out, and the great white moon never looked on a more pathetic sight than her lovely young face upturned to it as she sat there wrapped up in her happy day-dreams—those sweet dreams which come into a woman's life but once, and are always associated with her first love.

She sat there until Mrs. Morris missed her and came to search for her.

"Are you here alone, Mildred?" she said, surprisedly. "Why, I thought Gregor was here with you! I was almost sure I heard Gregor's voice."

"He was here and has gone," returned Mil-

dred, brightly; adding, bashfully: "But I cannot say that I was alone. I had the best and pleasantest of companions—my own thoughts."

"Ah, well, those rosy day-dreams are sweet enough for lovers, but the sky usually changes when you are husband and wife."

"Gregor came to tell me he would not remain this evening," remarked Mildred.

Mrs. Morris shook her head thoughtfully.

"Is a bad thing when lovers begin to make excuses about keeping their appointments with their lady-loves," she declared. "I always say they are off with some other girl."

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. MORRIS'S words, carelessly spoken though they were, gave Mildred a sudden chill at the heart, but she answered bravely enough,—

"Though other girls found every man in the world false I should believe Gregor true," she murmured; adding, very slowly and tremulously, "Why it would break my heart to—to even think anything else."

"Gregor is more honourable than most men," declared Mrs. Morris. "Still, it is the nature of men to be a little fickle once in awhile."

But even while they spoke of him Gregor Thorpe was hurrying towards Mrs. Archer's grand ball.

The hour was rather early for such gatherings, but despite this fact the grand *salon* and the magnificent drawing-rooms were crowded with the *élite* of society.

Gregor Thorpe was an especial favourite with the society belles—all, finely formed, handsome, with a courtly bearing and distinguished face that usually called attention to him in any crowd as a king among men, and many bright eyes grew brighter and the flush crept into many a girl's cheeks as he entered the arched doorway.

Paula saw him, and her heart beat quicker. She saw him glance eagerly about the room, and then a shade of disappointment crossed his fine face.

She knew that he could not see her, for she sat where the drooping branches of an oleander tree heavily laden with crimson blossoms, hid her from his view, and it served the same purpose of screening her from the observation of two ladies who had just sat down on a gilded settee a little way from her.

They were evidently mother and daughter, judging from their faces.

"Ah," said the young girl, with a decided French accent, "there is Mr. Thorpe, standing in the doorway. I wish he would look this way."

The elder lady flitted her fan towards him. It attracted his attention.

Gregor caught the eye of the owner of it, and smiled and bowed pleasantly.

By a delicate manipulation of her dainty fan, the lady beckoned him over to where she and the young girl sat, and he had no option but to obey.

"He is coming this way, Edith," she said, hastily. "Now smile your prettiest." Gregor Thorpe was certainly an admirer of yours last season, but you flirted so recklessly with every man that crossed your path that you quite disgusted him. I saw it in his eyes. Now here is an opportunity to rekindle yourself in his esteem. You are looking charming in that costume of pale yellow tulle with its garniture of silver. You should certainly take him by storm with your beauty, and make a decided conquest. Any other girl who had half your good looks would have a proposal of marriage from him before she was over."

"Thanks for your very flattering opinion," laughed the girl; "but as for capturing Mr. Gregor Thorpe's heart, I am sure it is among the impossibilities. It would be quite as easy to imagine the Sphinx falling in love. I tell you his heart is invulnerable."

"Nonsense. The heart of every man warms when he beholds a beautiful young girl," declared the other impatiently. "Not one girl in a thousand understands how to touch the sympathetic side of a man's nature—that is, the tender, golden thread that draws a man's heart towards her."

They don't understand it, I repeat, and that is the reason that their beauty fails to attract, and men drift past them to be entangled at last heart and soul by one who has not a particle of beauty to recommend her. Beauty attracts the eye, but it takes subtle sympathy and sweetness in a young girl to attract the magnet of the heart."

"I am so sick of your curdled lectures," cried the girl, crossly. "A ball-room is no place for them. Do cease until we are home."

"If you would only profit by what I tell you, Edith," sighed the other, "you would have been married long ago."

"I am not worrying over it," declared the girl.

"But I am," was the retort. "You have been in society three seasons now, and you have no lover yet, and every girl in your set married two years ago."

There was no opportunity for further discussion, for at that moment Gregor approached. He chatted most pleasantly for a few moments, then courteously took leave of the ladies.

The girl's face flushed with annoyance as she met the angry eyes of her companion.

"He did not invite you to dance!" remarked the lady tersely.

"Can I help it because he did not?" retorted the girl. "I could not do the asking, could I? That was his place."

"He was not interested in you. His eyes constantly wandered over the room while he was talking with you."

"I can't help that, either," declared the girl in anything but an amiable tone.

At this moment a very stout gentleman came and claimed them, and they moved away.

When they were quite out of hearing, Paula laughed immoderately.

"What amuses you so vastly, my dear?" said Mr. Barton, looking down into the lovely face so convulsed with mirth. "What pleases you, Mignon?"

"I am laughing at the very odd people banded here to-night," she said, and her mirth increased as she saw the look of blank bewilderment on his face. "All the young girls look as if they came here fishing!" she laughed.

"What a very droll expression!" said the banker, quite at a loss to interpret her words.

"Fishermans and ball-room belles have little in common, I should say. But let me ask you, my dear," he continued, "why do you refuse all of the opportunities to dance which have presented themselves? You have refused the most eligible young men in the ball-room."

"I do not feel like dancing just yet," replied Paula, evasively.

"You are fortunate if they ever ask you again," he declared.

As that moment Gregor Thorpe, in his tour of the room, saw them, and came hastily to Paula's side.

He saluted the old banker and Miss Dawes, then turned eagerly to the lovely girl by her side.

"The band has just struck up a waltz," he said. "Will you dance with me?"

She looked up into his handsome, eager face and smiled, laying her white-kidded little hand on his arm, and the next moment they were whirling down the ball-room together to the mad, sweet music of "My Queen."

There were many beautiful girls present; but none was so lovely as Paula, and she was quite conscious of the fact.

The frosty white tulle dress she wore fitted her slender form to perfection, and the fair, white, firm neck that rose like a marble column from it supported the most regal of heads with its wealth of golden curls.

Her blue eyes sparkled like diamonds, and her cheeks and lips were glowing like the heart of a great red rose. She was the very poetry of motion from the crown of her head to the toe of her dainty, white-slipped foot.

The sweet, winking, madness of the lights and the music, the beating of her heart so near his own, the golden tulle locks which every now and then brushed his cheeks, and the subtle perfume of the white roses she wore, quite intoxicated him.

"This is the happiest moment of my life, Miss Barton!" he murmured, almost brokenly.

He had completely forgotten in that moment the very existence of poor Mildred, who at that instant was watching the silent pitying stars with his name on her lips.

The girl's heart beat with pleasure as she heard those low-whispered, tremulous words.

"There is one thing which will make this waltz of ours memorable to me," she answered; "this is my first ball, and—and you are my first partner. I—I shall not soon forget."

"How thankful I am that I happened to be so fortunate!" he said. "Surely it must have been mere luck on my part! I dare not hope that you saved this—this pleasure for me?" he added questioningly.

She did not answer him, and he understood. His arm closed more tightly, more convulsively about her for one blissful moment, quite crushing her tumultuously beating heart against his own; but no one noticed this in the swift rush of the whirling dances.

At last the music ceased—the waltz that had meant so much to both of them was over at last.

"Shall I take you back to Miss Dawes, or will you promenade through the conservatory with me?" he murmured; and, to his great delight, the girl consented.

CHAPTER XXI.

WITH that white-kidded little hand resting lightly on his trembling arm, they passed from the lighted ball-room to the cool, green conservatory, heavy with the warm, odorous breath of the roses.

Gregor found a seat for his companion by the rippling fountain, and quietly seated himself by her side.

What is there about the cool, dim fragrance of such scenes that seems to draw the hearts of lovers nearer each other?

"Your first ball," he murmured, "and your first waltz! How thankful I ought to be that you selected me to be your first partner! Why was it, I wonder?"

She glanced up at him shyly, archly, and the gaze that met her own caused her to suddenly drop her eyes.

"Perhaps you were the first to present yourself," she answered; but he shook his head.

"In crossing the ball-room to come to you, I overheard no less than four young gentlemen ruefully telling their friends they had met with an ignominious refusal at your hands. Tell me," he added, imperiously—"you must tell me, Mignon—was I the favoured one?"

"You have no right to ask such a question, Mr. Thorpe," she answered, proudly.

"Yes, I have," he answered, huskily; "for my future life lies in the balance; and so I ask it again: Did you prefer me to all the rest for that first dance?"

There was no answer. She turned her head from him, and he could hear plainly the loud beating of her heart.

He bent nearer her, and caught the trembling little hand lying so idly in her lap.

"Miss Barton—Mignon, will you answer me?" he whispered, tremulously. "Is it so hard to acknowledge what your own heart tells you to be the truth?"

She tried to draw her hand from him, but he held it; clasped the tighter.

"I shall not let you go until you have answered me," he whispered. "Oh, Mignon, tell me: Dare I hope that the same subtle feeling took possession of your heart that captured mine the first moment we met? Did you look into my face, and say to yourself that you had met your fate—the only one on earth whom you could love, as I did when I saw you?"

She shrank back from him. The great, passionate love she had evoked the second time they had ever met quite bewildered her. The fire of those dark brown eyes looking so eagerly into her own seemed to scorch her very soul.

"Let me try to tell you the truth, Mignon," he said. "I love you—love you so madly that

life would not be worth living to me without you! When a heart meets a heart that Heaven has intended for its mate, love springs full-blown in an instant of time. I am mad to love you so. All last night I could not sleep or rest thinking of you. I—I counted the hours until I saw you here. I did not mean to tell you yet, but I could not stay the words on my lips. Oh, Mignon! I am you very angry with me for daring to tell you this!"

And before she could answer him, he had closed his arms tightly about her, and was straining her to his heart, kissing the beautiful golden curls, the lovely white face, and the rosy lips despite her struggles; and the sweet passion maddened him.

The intensity of his love frightened Paula, and yet it was glorious to be worshipped in this idolatrous fashion by this handsome young lover. Women always like to be loved after this fashion. She did care for him more than any one whom she had ever met.

She did not rebuke him when he clasped her in his arms. Her beautiful head drooped until it rested on his shoulder. The perfume of the flowers seemed to rise and enfold them; the faint, sweet music from the ball-room was like the faintest echo of love.

In that hour of supreme bliss, Gregor Thorpe had completely forgotten Mildred. He never once remembered that he had pledged his faith already—that every word he uttered was a breach of his vows never occurred to him. He remembered nothing but his great, passionate love for the girl whom he held clasped in his arms. The chances are that if he had thought of Mildred it would have been with a keen sense of regret. He was lost in that most witching of all hours—the one in which he woke first to the full charm of "love's young dream."

Suddenly she struggled out of his arms.

"The band has ceased playing; we must go back to the ball-room," she declared. "Miss Dawes will be looking for me."

"You have not given me the opportunity of saying one-half that I have to say to you, Mignon," he whispered, reproachfully.

"Then come to the house to-morrow and tell me the rest," she replied, archly. "Ah!" she went on in the same breath, "did I not tell you we should be married? There are my grandfather and Miss Dawes coming in search of us."

He had only time to murmur,—

"You are so good to me, Mignon dear. Yes, I will be there. I would come to you if my very life paid the forfeit."

They had both risen quickly. He drew her little trembling hand within his arm and they stood together by the fountain, apparently absorbed in watching the water drip from a marble Flora's dainty fingers, and talking on the most commonplace subjects, as Miss Dawes and the banker drew near.

It was the happiest evening Paula ever spent.

Gregor Thorpe accompanied them to their carriage, and his face was the last she saw as she turned from the brilliant scene.

"Have you enjoyed yourself?" asked the banker, settling wearily back among the velvet cushions.

"It has been the happiest event of my life," she answered, dreamily.

"It is a grand thing to be young, and to be able to enjoy such things," he remarked, with a smile. "Youth wants gaiety, noise and bustle, confusion—anything for excitement. Age is happy in avoiding all that."

"I think," said Miss Dawes, laughingly, "a certain young gentleman helped to make it very pleasant for Miss Mignon."

"There were so many," remarked Mignon, "I do not know which one you mean."

"Mr. Thorpe," responded Miss Dawes.

"Oh!" said Mignon, with a little forced laugh.

"That 'oh!' was non-committal," commented the banker, with a hearty laugh.

"Please don't plague me about him," pleaded the girl. "I shall not be able to treat him right if he ever calls."

"That is like the speech of an eighteen-year-old girl," said the banker. "When you got to

be years older you will not be troubled with those qualms of bashfulness. However, it is very pretty now, and very proper, and I duly admire it. The subject of Mr. Thorpe's agreeable manners, and his apparent admiration for our Mignon, shall be tabooed subjects from this time on."

"If you please," murmured the girl. Early the next morning, when Paula opened her eyes, she saw a bouquet of great white roses on a little gilded toilet-stand close beside her couch.

"Where did those come from, Nancy?" she asked of her maid.

"A boy brought them less than half an hour ago, miss," said the maid; "and the name on the card attached to them is 'Mr. Gregor Thorpe.'"

"Oh!" said Paula, again burying her blushing face in the lace pillow.

She would never have dreamed that Gregor Thorpe had written a letter—late as it was when he returned home—to a leading florist, inclosing his card, and requesting a bouquet of the rarest roses to be sent to her address the following morning very early. And only after he had ordered them, the thought occurred to him, how strange that he did not think to have one sent to poor Mildred too! He thought of her now for the first time since he had parted from her at the gate, and his heart gave a throb of pain.

He stood quite motionless in the street, the full horror of what he was doing, of his unenviable position, suddenly sweeping over him. He had made desperate love to one young girl, and he the betrothed husband of another! The veins stood out on his forehead like whiplashes; his breath came thick and fast; he clinched his strong white hands.

"I think I must indeed have been mad—yes, mad!" he cried out, hoarsely, to himself.

"This is what I shall do; marry poor Mildred, and go far away from here—so far that there will never be the remotest possibility of my ever looking upon Mignon Barton's fatally beautiful face again. If I had never met her, I would have made poor Mildred a better husband."

He had promised to call upon the heiress the next afternoon. Should he go or not? was the question that troubled him greatly. And, if he were to go, how should he greet the girl whose lips he had just kissed so passionately as he clasped her madly in his arms, whispering, as he strained her to his heart, that he loved her better than his life! Great Heaven! in that moment he had forgotten Mildred! Should he keep his appointment or write the whole story to Mignon Barton, imploring her forgiveness for his madness? That would mean her eternal loathing, her hatred, and it seemed to him death would be easier to bear than the knowledge that Mignon despised him.

He made grand resolutions that night. But he was only mortal; when afternoon came he was wending his way to Mr. Barton's mansion.

He had only one moment to wait in the drawing-room ere Mignon appeared. One glance at her lovely face, and his good resolutions flew to the winds. He sprang forward with the glad cry:

"Mignon, my beautiful love—my darling!" clasping her in his arms as though he should never let her go again, and covering her face with passionate kisses.

CHAPTER XXII.

GREGOR THORPE could never wholly account for the impulse which prompted him to betray his great love for the girl then and there by taking her, suddenly and without warning, in his arms, straining her to his heart, and daring to kiss her beautiful face, which was so near his own.

It was one of those moments which lovers seem to enjoy so much. Neither of them heard the heavy step on the velvet carpet of the corridor; and neither of them knew that there was a third party a witness to the unusual tableau until they both heard a voice roaring out in stentorian tones:

"Mr. Thorpe—Mignon! what does this scene mean? I demand to know the meaning of this!" said Mr. Barton, standing on the threshold, white with ill-suppressed rage, and looking from the one to the other.

The girl had sprung out of her lover's arms, trembling like an aspen leaf, her great blue eyes fixed in wide affright upon the old banker's face, but shrinking close to her lover's side, her hands clasped convulsively together.

"Grandfather, I—I will tell you," she began, falteringly. "I—"

"Hush!" he cut in, sharply and harshly. "I will talk to you later on this subject. Go at once to your boudoir and remain there until I come to you."

"Leave all to me," said Gregor, reassuringly, and smiling down into the lovely, frightened face.

She turned and slowly quitted the room, and Gregor never forgot the look of unutterable terror in her eyes.

The old banker closed the door carefully after her, then turned wrathfully to the young man.

It was the most trying moment of Gregor Thorpe's life.

To make love to a bewitching girl in an idle moment was one thing, and to face an angry man of the world in consequence of it was quite another.

There seemed to him but one path open to him, and Fate, as it ever afterwards seemed to him, forced him into it.

"Now, Mr. Thorpe, thundered the old banker, with flashing eyes, 'I ask you again, for the third time, what does this mean?'"

"Just what you might have very naturally inferred, sir," answered Gregor. "I love your granddaughter, Miss Mignon Barton."

"You know the rule in such instances," declared the old banker, angrily. "Why did you not come to me, as an honourable man should, and acquaint me with the state of your feelings and intentions, for of course I may reasonably suppose your intentions are certainly serious after what I have just beheld!"—this interrogatively.

With those harsh, unyielding eyes bent upon him, what else could he do than bow assent? For the first time in his life he grew so confused at the predicament in which he found himself that he completely lost his head. In that moment, with his thoughts in a whirl, he forgot the vows which bound him to another, and, realising that the banker was standing there, sternly, impatiently awaiting his answer, he replied, humbly,—

"You are right in your surmise, sir. I love your beautiful Mignon with all my heart, and if you will consent to let me make her my wife, I will be the happiest man the whole world holds. I know I should have come to you first, sir; but in an impulsive moment I betrayed my love to Miss Mignon, and I cannot picture to you my joy upon learning that she cared for me. You cannot wonder, sir, that my delight at this great discovery made me forget myself so far as to clasp her in my arms and kiss her."

"Which was all very wrong, sir—very wrong!" declared the banker, bringing his cane down heavily on the floor. "But for all that he could well make excuses in his heart for the lovers."

His mind went back to those hazy days when he was young; of the pretty rustic maiden who had been his star of hope; of the stolen meetings that were so sweet; of being rudely parted from his weeping sweetheart by stern parents, and his determination that no bolts and bars should keep her whom he loved so well from him; of the little secret note he tossed up to her window, and of the elopement which followed. All this was years ago, and for more than forty years the grass had been growing over his Dorothy's grave.

A lump rose in his throat as memory turned backward, traversing those almost forgotten paths of the dim past.

Ah, no! no one should ever be hard upon lovers, or break in rudely on their hours so sweet!

The old banker remembered how it had been with himself when he was young. He put out his hand and took Gregor's.



THE HOUR THEY SPENT TOGETHER AMID THE ROSE-BLOOMS SEEMED TO GREGOR A PERFECT DREAM.

"You ask me for the greatest treasure I have on earth to give; but I know full well the true worth of the man who asks it. I may go still further and say: I would rather see her your wife, Gregor Thorpe, if you are sure you really love each other, than the wife of any young man known to me."

"You are more than kind, sir," returned Gregor, enthusiastically, "and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. May I believe, sir, that your words imply that I may woo and win Miss Mignon, if I can?"

"I shall not object," returned the banker.

"May I see Miss Mignon, if but for a moment, to tell her that you would approve of a betrothal between us?"

"No. You can step into the library and put all you have to say in a note," returned Mr. Barton. "And, if you like, you shall come to-morrow and take luncheon with us."

"You are more kind than I dared hope for, sir," said Gregor. "I will gladly avail myself of your permission."

A few moments later Gregor was in the street, hurrying back to his hotel.

A sharp walk in the open air seemed to clear his brain a little; then suddenly, like a flash, the memory of Mildred and his true position came over him, and the thought almost took his breath away.

"Great Heaven! am I mad or dreaming?" he cried, stopping quite short, and passing his hand over his forehead in a dazed way. "Great Heaven! what have I done?"

At that moment who should he see but the very object of his thoughts, poor Mildred, walking briskly down the street towards him. His heart smote him when he saw how her face brightened when she saw him.

She smiled up into his face with the beautiful trustfulness of a child.

"I am so pleased to see you, Gregor," she said, flushing eagerly. "It was so thoughtful of you to come to meet me."

His voice choked—he could make no answer.

"I thought somehow that you would come to meet me and we would walk home together," she went on, lightly. "Why, how distract you are, Gregor! Has anything happened to—trouble you?" This with tender, wistful solicitude.

"I will talk to you when we reach Mrs. Morris's, Mildred," he said, hoarsely.

They walked on in silence, she watching him intently, and he with averted face.

He was wondering how he should tell her that which he felt she should know—she must know.

But how would she receive the story he had to tell her?

"Come out into the grounds and smoke your cigar; it is pleasanter in the rose-garden than in the sitting-room, I have often heard you say, and while you are meditating amid the clouds of smoke, I will get a dainty little repast for you and me—hot tea, biscuits, and golden butter, honey, and some wonderfully fine strawberries with thick cream. I picked the berries myself this morning."

"No, no," said Gregor, hoarsely, as he threw himself down on a garden bench. "I cannot eat; sit down and talk to me, Mildred."

But she flew away—from his detaining hand with a merry little laugh.

He shuddered as he thought how soon that laughter would be turned to tears.

He watched her with troubled eyes as she fitted about among the green leaves like a little brown linnæ.

She called to him when all was ready to come and sit under the shade of the apple-trees.

He rose mechanically and took the seat she placed for him.

"It is so sweet to have you come and take luncheon with us in this romantic fashion," she said, smiling. "Oh, I love so much to have you here—it is so home-like. I wonder if life will always be as beautiful to us as it is on this lovely summer day! I will always try to prove to you

that I care more and more for you as time rolls on, Gregor."

Again he tried to speak, but the words died on his lips, making no sound.

How dearly she loved him! Love shone in her dark eyes, in her smile, in the trembling of her little hands as they brushed against his—in even the tenderness of her low sweet voice whenever she spoke to him. Ah, Heaven! how terrible it would be to speak the words that were to slay her!

"I do not seem able to charm away your gloomy thoughts," she said, coming over to his side and laying her little brown hand on his arm. "Oh, Gregor," she added, softly, "if I could I would almost give my life to see you smiling and happy—if that were the price."

"Do you love me so much, Mildred?" he groaned.

"Yes, so much," she answered, laying her cheek against his hand. "Oh, you cannot think how grateful I am to God and the angels for giving me the one boon I craved most on earth—your love, Gregor!"

He bowed his head on his hands and groaned aloud.

How could he tell her what he had come to say! Man-like, he shrank from inflicting pain on this fair young girl who loved him so.

"I will come to-morrow and tell her," he said to himself.

He would give her a few brief hours more of happiness ere the sword fell which would slay all happiness in this world for her.

(To be continued.)

A CLUB exists in Vienna, the members of which are pledged to marry a poor girl. If, by chance or design, a member marries a rich girl, he is fined £400, which sum is bestowed on some respectable but impecunious couple engaged to be married.



"I—I WAS NEARLY DONE FOR!" FALTERS OUT BLYTHE, AND THEN SWOONS AWAY.

BROWN AS A BERRY.

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CHAPTER XL.—(continued.)

"You know I am not with the regiment now, so we need not come across the colonel and your sister (faster than you wished," the Major perseveres, hoping that he has hit upon her reason for refusal.

"It is not that. I have promised to marry Ronald May, and I will. I won't pretend to you that I am marrying him for love, but I like him very well, and the love will come afterwards."

"Perhaps."

"At any rate, we will hope so."

"Is he very fond of you?"

"I—I don't know," she stammers out in some confusion.

"That was a senseless question of mine. Of course he is. Who could help it?" declares the Major, gallantly, helping her out of the difficulty in which his indiscreet curiosity has placed her.

And soon after he takes his leave, more convinced than ever of her unhappiness, but equally aware, from what she has confessed, that all idea of helping her would be vain.

Berry goes over to the table when she is alone, and, brushing away the silver-monogrammed paper and envelopes impatiently, contemptuous of their creamy texture and general display, begins writing a letter for the English mail.

It is to Mrs. Holmes, telling her of this marriage which has been arranged; and unconsciously she opens more of her heart than she knows as she writes to the kindly-natured woman who has been so good to her before. If she had accepted any proffered hospitality at all it would have been here; for there, far away from anything that could remind her of what has happened, she might eventually have entirely forgotten, if forgetfulness ever comes to such a one as she. How true it is that Paradise would

be an impossibility but for its river Lethe running through it!

Then who knows, by-and-by, after many years, she might have rewarded John Holmes's constancy (which she takes for granted) and become his wife. Biting a long quill pen thus serves to hide an irrepressible smile at the picture she conjures up, she sees herself in fancy one amongst a horde of aldermanic swells, and wonders a little ruefully whether she ever could reconcile herself to the flavour of turtle soup, a luxury that she supposes indissoluble from civic dignity. Who knows, too, in time one of her sons might even rise to the highest pinnacle of all, even to the rank and ermine robes of London's great Lord Mayor.

This gorgeous prospect she greets with an irreverent laugh that grows into a succession of little silvery peals, during which the quill drops, and moving to pick it up she encounters Colonel Chester's curious gaze. He has been standing there some moments unobserved.

"You seem amused," throwing himself in a chair, and pushing back the moustaches from his mouth.

"Was I?" all radiance dying away at once as she encounters his mocking eyes.

"You were. May I ask the cause?"

"It concerned myself alone. I do not think you would be interested."

"There you do me an injustice, but let it pass. Is it customary for young ladies to write the invitations to their own weddings?" taking up an envelope and balancing it on his finger and thumb.

"I dare say not. I am not so happily situated as most girls. I have no father, no mother, and Eve cannot do it all."

He does not answer for a moment. His thoughts are evidently wandering, yet when he speaks it is in comment on her words.

"It was very terrible, your father's death. For my own part, I have no doubt as to its pre-intent. I was a gambler myself when young, and know well the pitfalls that I had

the good fortune, or call it strength of mind, to escape."

She stares at him in surprise. Any reference to his former life is so unusual from his lips; and why should he confide follies past or present to her ear?

"And your mother?" he goes on in unemotional voice, which she only divines to be meant as a question from the expressive pause.

"She died when I was a baby. Eve must have told you that."

"My wife and I are not a very discursive couple. I don't suppose she even knows whether my mother is living still."

"And is she? You never mention her?"

"Why should I? Every man has a skeleton in his closet, and I have more than one!" he mutters, almost inaudibly.

Berry looks at him in amazement. What is he going to tell her now?

Is it a veritable case of Blue Beard after all? And will he want to show her the corpses of his several murdered wives?

His next words, terrible as they are, tend to reassure her. Reality is always less awful than what our imagination can invent.

"My mother is in a lunatic asylum. She lost her reason giving birth to me. They say she is dangerously mad, but I have never looked upon her face!"

Berry suppresses a scream. Her nerves are utterly unstrung. And it is horrible to hear him talk in this unimpassioned way of a misfortune which might be fully veiled from all the world.

She does not notice how his eyes deepen and dilate, nor does she know that he is trembling from head to foot like one seized suddenly by ague.

"I suppose you will think me cowardly; and it does seem so, I admit. Some are naturally courageous, but I am not! I have paced up and down before those dreadful walls like the veriest craven, longing for, yet fearing to hear each meaningless laugh or despairing cry that floated through the air! I have always thought each

voice was here, and would have given anything to have dared to have taken her away and hidden her from those prying, pitiless eyes. You despise me, of course! You are so brave! But I—I had always a horrible fear of madness in any shape or form!"

She has covered her face with her hands as though to shut out a real sight that could only be gazed upon with pain. Then, as he comes, she looks up pale and scared.

"No, I don't suppose it is hereditary! You need not be afraid! I am quite sane yet, although I have had enough to drive me mad!" he observes, with a short laugh.

"I was wondering why you told all this to me."

"I must have been in the humour, I suppose, and one must speak out one's troubles sometimes!"

"Tell them to Eva!" pleads Barry, earnestly, leaning forward to enforce what she has said.

"Pshaw! It would frighten her into fits!"

He gets up and moves a step or two away, and has his back to her, so that she cannot see his face. When he turns, his expression is as inscrutable as ever.

"Thank you for letting me talk a little! It has done me good. And now about yourself!"

She fidgets uneasily in her seat, and resumes her pen, straightening her letter paper as though intending to go on with her writing.

"I would rather not speak of that!"

"I suppose you won't believe that I wish you well!"

He is looking before him with a slightly mournful air as though somehow his actions had been misconstrued. And indignant, as she has good cause to be, with him, Barry cannot help feeling sorry for the agony he has betrayed to her for the first time.

At least he is not devoid of human feeling, as she has always thought he was before; and who knows what fatal influence the gloomy incident of his childhood may have cast upon his later life.

"It is difficult to believe it in face of facts!" she stammers out, a little ashamed of her own leniency.

She has so often wished for an opportunity to tell him what she thinks of all that he has done; and now, when they are alone, and he has almost invited her condemnation, words fail her, and she is nearly mute.

The sword is in her hand, and her enemy half disarmed, yet she cannot strike.

"Yet it is true! I should like you to credit it if you can!" he says, with something akin to humility in his tone.

Then, as she, in her bewilderment, is silent, he suddenly walks hastily away out of the room and of the house, as though an avenging spirit were at his heels.

When she sees him again, and looks anxiously into his face, half hoping for a reprieve, even at this late hour, there is no response, not even a sign of the agitation and relenting he had shown for that one short space of time, the only recorded weakness of his life.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE "Pinks" muster in great force some few days before that on which the wedding has been fixed.

Everyone who can by any means obtain leave from their duties in the plains has taken it; even Major Payne relinquishes the command at his wife's request, and brings her up on this occasion. It is too good an opportunity to be missed of wearing her newest caps and costumes, even though the doctor's wife should guess it in her stead while she is absent.

Mrs. Sowerby comes up, of course, full of her own grievances, as usual, and making comparisons that are odious between her own lot and that of more fortunate friends.

Her husband has been left in charge of the regiment and his own five children—the latter maybe proving the more arduous occupation. It is not, however, certain that he does not prefer even that, as by remaining behind he escapes

the ceaseless castigations of his wife's embittered tongue.

She always wears more discontented during festivities like these, when her own poverty seems more glaring than ever by contrast with the display of wealth around. She kisses Barry affectionately and congratulates her warmly.

"Some people have such luck. I thought when you refused Mr. Blythe you would be sure to repent; but, after all, you have not done so badly. Mr. May is quite well off, I hear, now, but," regretfully, "you have missed the title you know. That would have been such a temptation to me."

Barry laughs at the little woman's weak-mindedness, which is too honest to be utterly contemptible.

"Ronald is second cousin to a baronet with five or six nephews and sons. A railway accident might sweep them all off."

"Ah! to be sure," is the cheerful reply.

"If I were heir to anything I would put all my money in railways. There is nothing like them."

"Nothing," asserts Barry, wishing that a few of her acquaintances and connections would come to an end in some such sudden way.

"At any rate, anyone is better than Captain Carew."

Barry blushes like a crimson rose at the unexpected mention of his name.

"That would have been a terrible misalliance."

"Terrible!" echoes the girl, ironically; and thinks how gladly, nevertheless, she would have become his wife even if he had been poorer than he is—if only he had been true.

Mrs. Payne's delight is, however, without alloy. She seems to fancy this wedding a special interposition of Providence in her behalf, and is correspondingly grateful for the same.

"It is always wise to have two or three stylish dresses laid by. They are sure to come in," she observes complacently, hovering around her portmanteau like a great honey-bee, and extracting wonderful sweetness from the odorous contents.

The adjutant comes up, too, more melancholy than ever, and more addicted to the pleasing of the great ones in the land.

India is a notorious nursery garden for tuft-hunting, and nowhere are rank and wealth held at such a high premium.

His wife walks him about triumphantly, and does not disdain his assistance in disseminating the scandal that is afloat. They have bought a handsome present for Barry, but delay the giving of it. Putting their heads together they have decided that there being "many a slip 'tween the cup and the lip," it is better to hold back.

"I have been watching them closely, and somehow I am not at all sure that it will come off even now!" observes Mrs. Lee-Brooke, shrewdly; "and it is no good giving presents for nothing!"

And to this her husband unhesitatingly agrees. It is, no doubt, good policy to make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, but it is also well to be assured that he will eventually be in a position to return your courtesy.

But all, however, are not so cautious, and the wedding gifts come pouring in until Barry is quite tired of opening parcels and unpacking boxes—the interest that generally a girl takes in everything connected with the coming event being naturally lessened in her case by the fact that she does not love the man she is marrying, nor look with any hopefulness to the life before her.

Captain Burdett comes himself to see her one day with a suspicious-looking packet under his arm, but his congratulations are not so fulsome as the rest. He, like Major Lennox, disapproves of this engagement which has taken them so by surprise, and comments upon it to himself in no measured terms. He had been present at the dinner party when Colonel Chester had proposed his sister-in-law's health, and had drawn his own conclusions from the attitudes of all concerned on that occasion.

Judging by an experience more varied than to be desired, he makes no doubt but that this marriage is arranged as a mask for future flirtation or to cover an indiscretion of the past. His good opinion of Mrs. Chester has been much

modified of late, and he had never thought highly of Ronald May.

"Unstable as water, and don't even want to excel. Just the sort of fellow to do all the mischief in the world. Women are so fond of pinning their faith on a weathercock. They don't know how to appreciate a straightforward, honest man."

And if this latter description points selfward, the egotism is unconscious, and not the outcome of a morbid sense of being misunderstood. He has no craving for popularity, and, therefore, feels no disappointment at his non-success with the world at large.

To Barry he says, with an accent of regret,—

"And so it is absolutely settled!"

"Yes. It is to be next week."

"I call it a thundering shame! You are too good for any man alive, except, perhaps, myself!" finishing his sentence with a half laugh.

"But you were not available, I suppose!"

"Pray, may I ask why not?"

"Do you mean to infer that you would have married me notwithstanding my fault of sex?" she retorts, darting an arch glance into his pleasantly ugly face.

"If only to break your independent spirit—yes!"

"Still, you won't bear malice. You will come and see it all. I have not so many friends that I can afford to miss one at such a time as this."

"I will come if you wish, though such things are not much in my line. At those marriages where I have been unavoidably present I have been more irresistibly reminded of a heathen sacrifice than conscious of the celebration of a Christian festivity!"

She winces and is silent.

"Don't be drawn into anything against your will, Barry. Take my advice, and we will all back you up through thick and thin. You are a child of the regiment, you know, and we are all responsible for you in a way. It is better even to retreat at the eleventh hour than be miserable all your life!"

"Is it necessary to do either?" she asks, constrainedly, a pained look stealing over her face.

"I hope not. You must not be offended at my speaking so without my book. I did not know whether you had well considered the step you were about to take. It is not my *miester* to advise. I am more given to act the part of Telemachus than Mentor, but I thought I ought to speak now as an old friend."

"A dear old friend!" says the girl, gratefully; and then, as she sees him turning over the parcel he still holds awkwardly from one hand to another, apparently at a loss how to dispose of it, she adds, smiling,—

"Is it a present for me? Mayn't I see?" reaching out her hand.

"Of course you may," giving it up at once with an air of relief. "Isn't it very true that, if it is more blessed to give than receive, it is more embarrassing, too!"

As she endeavours to undo the knots, which are almost Gordian in their intricacy, he breaks in with a piece of news he has heard as he came along, to put off as long as possible the inevitable thanks which he dreads.

"Have you heard of this terrible adventure of Carew and Mr. Blythe?"

"No; what is it?" stooping to bite an obstinate piece of thread.

"They went out together down the cart-road after a tiger, a day or two ago, and this morning the tidings reached us they had met and killed him, but at a fearful sacrifice, I am afraid. The natives have it that one is dead or dying, and the other badly hurt. But, of course, they exaggerate, and I don't suppose for a moment it is true."

The parcel is opened now, and Barry holds the contents. The gift is a costly one, and well-chosen, but she scarcely sees it, or knows it is in her hand.

"Do you know which it is they said was dead?" she asks, with bated breath, leaning forward the better to catch the reply, which seems so slow in coming. Her lips are parted in suspense, and she looks wildly, almost despairingly, into his face.

"I have startled you, I am afraid. I ought not to have repeated such miserable gossip without first ascertaining if it was correct," answers Captain Burdett, remorsefully.

He is proverbially dense in matters of this sort, and has no notion that Berry is more moved by his intelligence than is natural to her easily excited sex.

"But which?" she repeats, impatiently, almost ready to fall.

"It was Blythe, the new A.D.C., you know. Rather a good fellow, I believe, but terribly impressed with a sense of his own importance, as those fellows always are. Why, what is the matter, Berry?"

She has sunk on to a chair, and is laughing hysterically, with the tears standing in her eyes.

"Nothing; I am not very well, a little over-tired, and your news took me by surprise. Oh! I do hope that neither of them is seriously hurt," a sudden feeling of compunction coming over her for the relief she had experienced at hearing Mr. Blythe's name mentioned as the injured one, and not John Carew's.

"Oh! no, of course not. These reports always dwindle down to nothing."

"I—I think I will go and tell Eve," says Berry, and escapes from the room, without even thanking Captain Burdett for the present he has brought, an omission which, if that gentleman notices, he certainly does not resent.

He is, perhaps, a little surprised that she does not return with Mrs. Chester, but even that does not awake any definite suspicion of the truth. It takes a thief to catch a thief, and he has never been much versed in woman's ways.

Later on in the day they receive more authentic news. Mr. Blythe is reported to be seriously wounded, but Captain Carew is uninjured, and returning with his friend at once.

It had happened in this wise.

Some natives, coming into the station, had brought word that a man-eater had been committing great havoc in a village some twenty or thirty miles away, keeping the inhabitants in such a state of deadly fear that all field work is practically suspended, and after dark no one dares venture out at all.

One of the men happened to be a shikaree that Carew had once or twice employed for the marking of smaller game, and his memory being still gratefully green for back-scratch of the past, and in anticipation of more in the future, he goes first to his employer with the news.

Carew acts eagerly on the information, and, fearful of being forestalled, packs up a portmanteau as usual, and having secured coolies and laid a dak, is on the point of starting, when Spencer Blythe walks up. He, too, is in travelling gear, and is leading a smart hill pony.

"I am off, after this tiger!" he says, going into the subject at once, without any preliminary greeting; "and only just heard from a shikaree I was trying to engage that you were going too. We might as well join forces, don't you think?"

Carew hesitates a moment. Blythe is no favourite of his, and he is vexed at the intrusion.

"Don't want to share the glory—eh?" asks the new comer, imperturbably bland.

"The fact is!" answers the other, honestly, "I am hipped, and out of sorts. I am not in humour for companionship, nor for taking even the ordinary precautions. The tiger is just as likely to kill me as I him! I am going on foot, and meant to go alone. Frankly, I advise you not to come!"

"Fact is!" confesses Mr. Blythe; "I have written for elephants to meet me, but if you think a little risk would add zest to the adventure, I am quite willing to go without them. I have no more reason to set any store by my life than you—if as much!"

"Not! How's that! Has lady-killing become a crime punishable by law, and are you fleeing from justice, or is it one farther than the rest has avenged her suffering sex?" asks Carew, with a sneer, at which, however, Mr. Blythe does not take offence.

"Of course I know I have been an arrant fool, an insufferable coxcomb," he returns, good-

humouredly; "but retribution has come at last, and don't taunt me, there's a good fellow! I fancy one blow has had the punishing of us both, though you did not deserve it!"

"You mean—"

"I mean this marriage is the very deuce, and I can't stand by patiently, and see it all if you can! In any case I'm off at once; it is for you to decide whether I go with you."

"You may come if you like!" ungraciously.

"Thanks! I'm not sure I would have taken a denial either. You want someone to look after you while in this reckless state; and, besides, I want to restate myself in your good opinion. What an idiot you must have thought me on board ship!"

"That is all ages ago. Let it rest!"

"I am not going to revive it after this. It was not to my credit. And now I suppose we may as well be off!"

"Yes, if we want to reach the spot in time to get at the beast to-morrow."

"Then here goes," vaulting into his saddle, "and to show we bear no malice we'll give the skin as a wedding present to Miss Cardell."

"If we get it," answers Carew, smiling; and, won over at last by the other's irresistible good temper, he reaches out his hand.

It is grasped heartily, and from that moment the two men are firm friends.

They reach the village late that night, and, pitching their tent, retire to rest at once so as to be up by daybreak.

The tiger's exact whereabouts seems uncertain; he had been seen the day before, but the natives had been too scared to observe the way he had taken, and their tidings are consequently vague and dissimilar. However, hearing of a likely spot about a couple of miles away, they are off betimes, both feeling pleasantly excited at the prospect of the day's sport.

They are going in Indian file along the side of a ravine, Carew leading and Blythe behind, the natives following with their guns, and had walked only about half the distance, when, looking up, they are just above them on the bank the animal crouched, and on the point apparently of making a spring.

It is some seconds before they fully realise all the deadly meaning of those yellow, glaring eyes and the slowly oscillating tail, but such seconds are like hours. Flight is impossible. They are too near, and it would only precipitate the danger. Taken by surprise, and foolishly unarmed, the life of one must certainly be sacrificed it seems. Why should it not be the most worthless and least profitable of the two?

So thinks Spencer Blythe, and, grasping the situation in a moment, he pushes past to the front, and by his sudden, unexpected movement throws his friend down the khud. He calls to his servant for his rifle with a vain hope that he may not fall him in this emergency. An instant's death-like silence! Then there is a roar, and the enormous animal, flashing through the air, seizes his nearest victim, and, hardly seeming to touch earth, makes another bound far up the bank.

Carew, falling but a few yards down the shelving side, recovers himself with a rapidity born of the necessity of the moment, and clambering on to the path, he sees the frightened natives flying back to the village, only his shikaree, touched by some unusual sense of duty to his master, stands a few yards aloof, and now hurries towards him with his rifle.

Blythe is nowhere to be seen, but, following the direction of the man's terrified gaze, Carew is soon made aware of where the danger lies by a succession of low, half-suppressed groans. Another step forward, and stooping a little he can see on the other side of a belt of small stunted trees, the brute standing grandly, holding his motionless prey partly off the ground.

Carew is an old sportsman, and does not spoil his chances by undue haste. Lowering himself carefully he gets a steady aim, his elbows resting on the ground, and fires twice. Then without waiting to see if his shots have taken mortal effect or only maimed and made more savage his dangerous foe, he is up to them just in time to drag his friend beyond the reach of the last spasmodic struggles of the prostrate beast.

Blythe looks up with a world of grateful relief in his eyes; his face working terribly in excitement, but he tries hard to regain his usual calm insouciance.

"I—I was nearly done for," he falters out, with a suspicion of tears trembling in the voice, "nearly done for. It would have been all up with me if I had moved, or you had not come so soon. He is a splendid fellow—the finest I have seen—I don't think I ever saw one so near before—alive."

And then swoons away.

CHAPTER XLIII.

How slowly that week drags out its aggravated length. It is like those last five minutes of a man's life, when all the deeds, good and evil, of the years gone by pass before him, panoramic fashion, and all whom he has ever known, loving or hating, confront him like grey, grieving ghosts to warn away, or welcome him, as he has given them cause.

Parting is almost always a protracted pain; the last minutes seeming like hours, the hours like days, and then the interminable afterwards, which is as though it would never end but remain, ever as it is at first, a dreary blank perpetuated by its own intolerable agony.

There is nothing that Berry will sorrow much to leave, taken individually; but I fancy we share more than we know the idiosyncrasy of the feline species in our love for the places where we have lived, even though it has not been altogether a happy sojourn there.

The sisters have lived together always, save for the first fifteen months of Eve's wedded life, and though Berry's affection for her sister has sensibly decreased, as her childlike adoration was also diminished before (when the case of Love versus Money was decided for the defendant); still, now that it comes to the final wrench, she cannot break the tie of early years without a pang.

Then, too, there are the great white snows, which morning after morning have met her view and seem like old friends, the nearer mountains with their violet garb of mingled brown and green, and the valleys rich with a hidden board of fragrant wild flowers, and quaintly fashioned orchids or ferns that cluster in every nook and cranny, clinging to ancient trees, or climbing over the smooth and mossy stones that mark a river's course.

She will be sorry—very sorry to leave India, it having only showed to her its fairer side; sorry, too, to go home where, if existence was less unpleasantly full of complications and decays, it was also duller and drearier far; but sorer than all that she is going so—a disappointed woman and unloving wife.

India had been the dream of her life, and when she landed at Bombay her sweetest hopes seemed likely to be realised, only now to be crushed and embittered for always.

Colonel Chester is sparing nothing to make the occasion of this marriage a memorable one. He has been entertaining royally during these last few days, and on the evening before the wedding-day itself has inaugurated a dance, to which nearly the whole station is invited.

Berry goes through the galeties listlessly, as indifferent to the thoughts of those around her as she would have been to their neglect; noting, a little nervously, Ronald's changed demeanour as the fateful time draws nearer and even nearer still. Sometimes he is positively rude, baited to madness, as it appears, and at others he is seized with fierce fits of affection that his fiancée finds even more appalling. Once he has caught and kissed her before she knew, and since then she has carefully avoided being left alone with him, dreading the time when there will be no escape, when for better or for worse she must accept him as the ruling influence of her life.

She cannot help seeing—as Eve saw when she refused to risk her happiness on his faith—the deplorable weakness of his will; how red-hot he is shaken with every passing breeze of wind.

Whether it might have added to the stability of

his character, if he had loved a better, nobler woman than Eve could ever have been, however favourable the circumstances of her training and education, it is impossible to say. These might have been among the many problems of our unaccounted-for existence.

No reason that the most reasonable has ever urged seems sufficiently powerful a one to be accepted as a primary cause for all the sin, sorrow, and suffering, all the love, joy and enjoyment that has been gathered together on this our much-abused and over-crowded earth.

"Plus on y pense, et plus on est à la fois de chercher la cause de cette sottise qu'on appelle le monde." So wrote Benjamin Constant, while another with a happier temperament or more fortunate experience, calls it the "best of all possible worlds." Do not we all judge less by hearsay than by how we ourselves have found it?

This last day is, perhaps, the least trying of all that have passed, for Ronald keeps away and no one visits them, thinking they will be too engaged in preparation for the morrow. Berry spends all the day in really hard work, helping Eve to decorate the rooms, and in the evening goes and lies down upon her bed, not to rest, but to face at last the terrible reality that is inevitable now.

She is so deep in thought that she forgets to rouse, and when Eve comes to tell her it is time to go (for the dance is not given at their house, but at the assembly rooms), she is still in morning dress.

"I am ready now," she says ten minutes later, having forced herself hurriedly into fitter and more bridal-like apparel; and snatches up her handkerchief and gloves.

"You don't look ready," observes Mrs. Chester, with sisterly bluntness.

"Eh! Have I ruffled my hair putting on my frock!" turning to the mirror and smoothing a refractory curly lock.

"Your hair looks best rough. I don't mean that; but you have nothing round your neck nor in your hair. It makes you look so undressed," looking critically at the creamy neck and arms which are so clearly defined against the white gown. "Why don't you wear some of the presents you have had; you have plenty to choose from, I am sure."

"I don't feel as if I had earned them yet," answers Berry, a little bitterly; she is so apt to become bitter now-a-days, poor child, being so out of tune with herself and the future into which she is being forced.

"Well, something you had before. You must have had something, surely!"

"Not much, as you might remember, I should think."

But Eve is busy with her sister's jewel case, turning out the somewhat meagre contents on to the table, and picking out at last the ruby heart, John Holmes's compensative gift.

"That is pretty, only of course it is not real; garnets I suppose, or is it glass?"

Berry is silent, bearing the slur cast upon her property with the more equanimity that she does not feel inclined to be reminded of the past in any way to-night.

The next moment Eve has brought out the coral beads and clasped them round her sister's neck.

"There! Such an improvement, a touch of colour always is to doubtful looks. Don't be offended, dear; we can afford to be frank with each other now and then; you would be lovely always if you could keep the crimson cheeks you have now. Did I starve you?"

"It—it was cold at first."

After all, why should she not wear it—just for this once and for the last time. He will never know, and it comforts her to feel it round her throat. It is like the firm clasp of an old friend's hand, when one's feelings are too overwrought to bear the jarring sound of words, however sympathetic they may be.

"It is very pretty and uncommon, and sets off your little, quaint, brown face. There, I will put these red roses in your hair, and I have a crimson feather fan that will just match."

"Thank you, dear," answers Berry, gratefully, feeling more the kindness of the act than its happy effect upon her appearance.

"You have no proper pride in yourself at all, I am afraid," dolefully. "I am afraid you will look wretchedly to-morrow."

"What's the odds?" retorts Berry, reckless even to the extent of using slang, a thing most abhorrent to her soul.

"Well it doesn't matter much to me, at any rate. It is your own affair, of course," frigidly.

And letting the subject settle itself so, Eve gathers up her own fastidiously elegant draperies, and sweeps gracefully from the room.

Ronald meets them on their arrival at the rooms. He is flushed and excited, and has evidently been drinking his own health more frequent than is good for him. He appropriates Berry at once, and drawing her arm through his, leads her round to show her all the prettiness that have been temporarily arranged in her honour.

"Isn't it a success! I superintended everything myself, so it ought to be; and everyone is to be here I believe—everyone but that poor fellow Blythe."

"And Captain Carew, of course!" hastily.

"No; I think he'll come if he can leave Blythe. I asked him myself the other day."

And after that Berry hears no more of his slightly disconnected and unintelligible phrases. She goes through her duties of receiving, dancing, and talking as in a dream; and so mechanically does she act and speak, it is a puzzle to herself then and afterwards how it is that late in the evening, or rather in the early morn—the morn of her wedding-day—she and John Carew stand face to face with only the moon streaming over them a chastened light.

They have wandered out through the verandah into the open, and are out of sight and hearing of the rest, but she does not think of putting this practical construction on their presence here alone; it appears only a natural if unexpected ordering of destiny they should be brought together to say a last farewell. Only when he speaks the spell is partly broken. "Words are good, but they are not the best; the best is not to be explained by words," says Goethe, and I am persuaded there will be some more melodious and harmonious mode of interchanging thought than by the human voice (which at the best is wavering and uncertain) in that Heaven we instinctively desire.

"You are not vexed at my bringing you out here!" asks John Carew.

"Vexed, no! Why should I be?" vaguely, and a little surprised, scarcely realising that it is by his own volition and that they are not both irresponsible being in the hands of a superior fate. It is so pleasant to dream on and on, and the reality is so widely different she does not care to wake.

"I wanted so to see you—for the last time."

"Yes," she answers, dreamily.

"And I have a message from Blythe—Spencer Blythe—you know whom I mean," puzzled by her straightforward, incomprehensible gaze.

This is coming to the events of every day, and she can answer without that feeling of uncertainty and unreality that has hampered her before.

"Yes, I know. Is he better now?"

"He is far better; as well almost as he ever will be again. He is a cripple for life."

She looks up with serious and suddenly saddened eyes.

"Is it so bad as that?" she murmurs, in a hushed voice.

"I am afraid it is. The doctors give very little hope. It ought to have been me, you know. He pushed before me, almost into the tiger's mouth."

"Poor fellow! I am so very, very sorrowful! Will you tell him so from me. I don't think we ever suspected him of such nobility or bravery in the old days—when we met him first."

"We never did him justice. He never did justice to himself. But he bears this trouble so bravely and sent such cheery messages to you, wishing you all happiness in the new life before you. He is more generous than I. I—I cannot—Heaven help me!" he cries, overcome with the thoughts his own words have called to life.

She, too, is uncontrollably moved, but she does

not speak, and how can he guess all that is in her heart!

"Miss Cardell, I could have forgiven your fickleness to me if it had been for the sake of such an one as I have proved him to be. But this fair-haired boy, who does not value you as he ought, and who, they say, is desperately in love with your sister! How can you have been persuaded to so cruelly sacrifice yourself?"

She sighs and does not reply. Why should she stoop to defend herself from the charge of fickleness made against her by one who has himself been proved untrue!

(To be continued.)

FAIR AND FALSE.

—101—

(Continued from page 489.)

She felt impatient to flaunt it before the girl she had never liked, but envied with malicious jealousy for her youth, beauty, and wealth.

She noiselessly glided across the landing, and turned the handle of Pearl's door, which was open for a wonder, and passed in; the poor girl in her fatigue and bitter anguish had forgotten to lock it.

The lamp was turned low; its soft, mellow rays fell upon the handsome brass bedstead and the girl who lay fast asleep with pearl drops lingering on her silken lashes, evidence that she had fallen asleep weeping.

Miss Carnegie stood by the bedside and looked down upon the sleeper; the pretty hands, still glistening with jewels, were crossed upon her bosom, one clasping tightly Sir Olive's registered envelope. Her bronze-hued hair streamed in massive waves over the mounds of linen and lace; never in her happiest or brightest moments had she looked fairer. The sight caused the watcher to knit her brows. The purity and innocence of the sweet, young face made her wrathful and envious, for she could not dispute with her own conscience the wide, immeasurable gulf there was in beauty of form and feature as well as heart, over her more bold style of beauty, and designing selfish nature.

"I hate you!" she muttered spitefully, as she stole away. "This house will not be large enough to hold us both. You must go; I will have no rival!"

After breakfast the following morning the Major took Pearl aside and whispered—

"Come into the library a few minutes, my dear; I have something to tell you."

In response she tucked her hand under his arm and smiled brightly, little dreaming of the revelation she was about to hear.

He gave a preliminary cough or two, as if he dreaded to broach the subject, then commenced rather nervously—

"I fancy the news will not only surprise but please you, as you are so attached to the lady. The fact is, Miss Carnegie has consented to become nearer and dearer to us, to be what she is now, in reality—a loving mother to you, and my wife!"

Pearl stood like one suddenly turned into marble, with eyes positively distended with mute amazement.

"You do not speak," he observed, testily, regarding her anxiously.

"Oh, papa, papa!" she faltered; the bonds of speech breaking forth at last in a very torrent. "What have I done that you should wish to take another to your heart?"

"Do you fancy my heart is so insignificant, child, that I cannot feel love for two dear ones?" he urged, almost reproachfully.

"I have hitherto been your pet, your all," she pleaded, brokenly.

"That I admit, but another has come and won you away from me. Very soon I shall be left desolate and alone."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried; "keep me always with you. Do not, I implore, turn me from your heart and home!"

"Little pet, you almost alarm me!" he said tenderly, stroking the sunny head caressingly. "You are certainly not quite the thing. I must take you to town, as Leslie advised me."

"I will not go!" she exclaimed rebelliously. "If you love me send Miss Carnegie away. She can never be mother of mine, even in name."

In an instant her father changed and shook her away almost roughly.

"What inconceivable folly is this!" he demanded, angrily.

"Forgive me, father!" cried Pearl, blinded by tears at these, the first harsh words he had ever spoken to her. "I am so sorry to wound you. Oh! have a little pity; it is all so terribly sudden, and I thought we were linked together for ever."

"You are an affectionate, loving child," he said, with a return of his old tenderness; "only you forget, in your simplicity, that old Father Time possesses a scythe to mow down the weary and stricken in years, leaving the young to mourn for a brief time, till the turmoil of life obliterates the beloved memory."

"To obliterate is to forget," she replied, wistfully. "I could never forget you while life lasted."

"Other ties and thoughts will distract you in the time to come, my child; maybe little tongues will lip the sacred name of mother then, and be to you the same solace and comfort you have been to me."

Pearl's head gave a sad little shake as she added up to him with restored confidence, now that his voice had its old kind ring again, and saying, with a little inward shudder of repulsion,—

"I have only one wish, papa, to see and feel you are happy; but do not send me away from you yet."

There was such a depth of pathos in her tone that for a moment he regretted his hasty offer to Miss Carnegie, and blamed himself for not testing the feelings of his little pet before it was too late.

"You are over-sensitive," he said, gravely. "The wear and tear of the world will work its own cure, rest assured; though, my child, I shall never drive you from my heart and home; you forget another has usurped my place, a nearer and a dearer one."

"No, no!" she protested vehemently. "You are all I love in this world."

"Come, come!" he urged, firmly, believing she was somewhat capricious, "you are talking treason to Keith. Even I must veto such naughtiness," taking her in his arms and kissing the quivering little mouth, and dimpling her.

"Would that I could die!" she moaned, when she gained her room. "Life is now a dreary waste; all I love are riven from me by cruel fate. Carnegie has usurped my place with papa, and GIVE is gone, gone for ever!"

Miss Carnegie took especial care the guests, who were staying in the house, and Leslie, too, should be made acquainted with her new relations with the master of Waterchase, and also assumed the reins of government openly to servants and retainers.

When Pearl could assume a calm demeanour she sought her father's betrothed, and murmured, in heartfelt words,—

"Papa has told me all. I wish you every happiness, only love him as I feel he does you, and I will be a devoted, obedient daughter to you."

"You may depend upon my love," she rejoined, hypocritically. "It is his already; when you are married you will come sometimes and see us, and I shall be able to give you a lesson on matrimonial bliss. It will be rather fun, a daughter taking example of her step-mother!" this with a nasty sarcastic ring which jarred on Pearl.

"I dislike the term of stepmother," she observed, warmly. "It signifies a loveless relation who feels no love for you!"

"How very sentimental you are, dear! You know what the poet says—'A rose with any other name will smell as sweet,' etc."

"I am very tiresome, I know; so I'll crave a kiss, and pardon at the same time, my hand—

some mamma that is to be," she said, penitently, kissing the false lips affectionately and trustfully.

No Judas kiss could have been more hollow or false than poor Pearl received in return, though it appeared warm and sympathetic to her, frank, simple as she was, verily believing now that her father's future happiness was secure.

Leslie Keith took his departure in a few days in a vortex of doubt and perplexity, for the dashing brunette charms of Miss Slater had, in a great measure, weaned him from his lovely but cold *fiancee*, coupled with the potent charm of her handsome fortune. He began to think he had been very precipitate in sacrificing his liberty so rashly, and devoutly wished he could get quit of the whole affair with at least a semblance of honour.

(To be continued.)

FOUND WANTING.

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CHAPTER I.

A ROARING, tumbling weir, flinging its swirling eddies into the broad lagoon with a perpetual din of sound, tossing up its showers of spray, dancing into the air and back again into the white foam below; beyond, the river flowed on placid and glorious in the beauty of deep-tinted foliage rising above the banks in terraces.

Just below the weir, and outside the rush of the waters, a broad-bottomed punt was moored, and in it sat a man holding his fishing-rod gravely, and as gravely now and then lifting it—to find thereon nothingness.

Further off, where the drooping trees threw their deep shadows, another small boat lay, and the waters here were so still that she needed no aid to keep her almost motionless. Her occupant sat with his arms crossed on his scull, as motionless as his boat.

On the river, the trees, the far-off fields and wooded hills there was a glow of heat and dazzling brightness; cool, dark shadows where the sun could not penetrate the thick leaves, and everywhere a wealth of beauty, a perfection of colour that might hold one breathless and silent.

The fisherman scarcely lifted his eyes; the man in the boat presently drew a long breath, and pushed back the white cap.

"I could dream here all day," he said, half aloud, "if only—bah!" with a slight laugh; "what a fool I am, not to be content with all this. Content! do I know what it means I wonder!"

He did not look like it—there was not a tranquil line in the whole face. Even while he had sat so still the face had not been still, though there was not the quiver of an eyelid. If one may be allowed the expression, there were under-currents always moving restlessly beneath whatever calmness there might seem to be. It was a face worthy of study; a girl would have envied the complexion, clear, and pale, and fair, yet with the softness of the darker skins; the delicate chiselling of the features; above all, the hair of that rare golden hue no art can imitate, save that of the painter—hair that glistened and changed with every shade of light. Large deep blue eyes that looked at you straight, but not frankly; and trying to see more you met only something that almost repelled—something ruthless. You looked at the beautiful moulded chin and mouth to try and find there some harmony with those looks like a girl's, and those delicate features; but again you were baffled. Strength, power in plenty, softness at times, a flash, a gleam; but everywhere, in eyes, on lips, on brow, the same storminess, the same lack of something to make his beauty perfect; the something a man may take from the mother who bore him, from her first passionate kiss, from the half divine love his baby eyes see dimly in the face he learns to know before every other; but this man had missed all that.

Slowly the bright blades dipped into the shining water, slowly the little boat crept out into the stream, close to the weir; and the man in the punt looked up angrily, and dropped his line.

"What the deuce—!" said he; but only the river and the air could hear him, for nothing less than a shout could have conquered the noise of the weir. "Hang those fellows darting all over the river in those confounded little boats! I had nearly caught that big fellow, and now he's off!"

In went the line again, and the rower, gliding slowly across the head of the weir, watched the operation with a sarcastic look. He had almost passed when the angler, drawing in his line again, lifted his eyes, and they rested on the golden-haired oarsman; and somehow Oxford and the Isle and the May races and a name all flashed into his mind together—and the name was Albrecht. It slipped from him unawares, as they had used it in the student days, else he had scarcely claimed acquaintance with a man he had never loved. But it was too late; the rower, nearer now, because the passage to the main water obliged him to be close, had heard the familiar name, and paused.

"Pelham Clifford, isn't it?" said he, not coolly, not cordially.

"Where did you spring from, Delmar!" said the angler.

At college together—not college chums—that was plain, Delmar pulled back, and the men shook hands—friendly, but no more.

"You're changed, Pel!" said Delmar, half-unconsciously using a nickname, as the other had used his; "I was watching your line a minute ago, but I hardly saw you, and I'm not sure I should have known you if I had. What brings you in this part?"

"Why, the fishing," responded "Pel"; "it's splendid, as, of course, you know."

"Only by hearsay, I never fish. I dare say you wished me somewhere else just now. Awfully sorry, but it's the only way to the main stream."

The young man made his apologies with some carelessness.

"How long do you stay?"

"Another week, I think," said Clifford. "But I might ask you, as you did me, what brings you here? You don't mean to say that you, an urban soul, have become rural?"

"For the present, yes. Besides, you know, my place is here—just up the river," with a sweep of the hand, "and it is mine now."

"I saw your father's death in the *Times*," said Clifford, "I was afraid you were away. Tom Lonsdale—you remember him, of Oriel—he's just been called to the Bar—told me he had met you in Switzerland; that very day I saw the notice, and Lonsdale had just got to London. So you're sole possessor, are you? It's a charming neighbourhood, and some good people about."

"What are you doing?" asked the other, abruptly.

He had sat with rather a shade on his face during Clifford's speech, and the latter quite understood its cause. It had been said at Corlet Church that Albert Delmar and Delmar père had not been on the best of terms.

"Doing? My dear fellow, what should I do! Unfortunately we men, born as you and I are, with silver spoons, are not the active members of the State."

"Silver spoons! Speak for yourself, Pel, I know nothing about them. Mine are electroplated. We Delmars never were as rich as your people. So you sit down, so," laying his hands listlessly over his scull. "Well, I can't blame you. I've been abroad, and I've come home, and I can't settle to anything just yet."

"You used to write at Oxford; have you given that up?"

"Oh! no, I never shall, but I've got into one of my unsettled moods, and I can't do a thing. My thoughts won't come and my pen won't move. May I ask how is that pretty sister you used to rave about? I forget her name."

"Christine. So you remember about her! What fools we were in those days. She's been at home—at least, with my uncle's family; she was too young to be with me. Now she is with some friends abroad, but I hope to have her back soon."

Well, the sun is getting awfully hot, and I can't stand baking."

"Will you come and lunch with me?" asked Delmar, with more cordiality than he had shown before. He did not like Pelham, but he did not dislike him, and, to a stranger in the neighbourhood, he felt it a duty to show hospitality. "It's quite near, and if you'll come into my boat I'll send down a man for the punt."

"Oh, thanks! I shall be delighted!" said Clifford, looking with a feeling of pleasure at the silken cushions. He smiled as a thought crossed him. "Hullo! Albrecht—beg pardon, but I heard the name so often—Delmar, I should say." Delmar did not disavow any objection to the greater familiarity. "I'll be bound this boat has borne fairer passengers than me!"

"Of course it has, since I know all the people thereabouts to know!" was the answer, but there was a swift involuntary glance towards a white house standing across the river, and seen through a trellis-work of green.

Presently Mr. Clifford transferred his staid and well-formed person to the little skiff, and Delmar pulled up the river till they came to an old-fashioned, rambling house surrounded by a tangled garden, and orchard full of such apple and pear trees as people say are not now often seen in this bonnie island. It looked very picturesque, but not well kept.

On the lawn sloping to the river there was a mass of rose-trees and all manner of old-world flowers sent their sweetness far over the water.

The old house looked a place to love dearly, to dream in, to be full of sunny corners and deep window-seats, where old friends might sit and talk of their youth, and the young folk might listen to weird legends, or to whispers the elders must not hear.

Clifford's first sensation was one of pleasure, his next dissatisfaction. His artistic senses were not strong enough to triumph over his love of order, which he scrupulously observed on his own property. But he praised the place politely, to which Delmar answered by a slight smile, and, mooring the boat, led his guest into the house.

But within there was no disorder, though there was also no precision.

Luncheon was spread on a small table in a great oriel window in the dining-room, and there was nothing to find fault with in the massive silver, of pattern such as are never seen in modern silver-smiths; the china, quaint and antique, nor the damask, smooth and glossy.

A connoisseur in wines, Clifford knew those served to be of a particularly famous vintage. Nor could he complain of the dishes offered to him. But the long morning on the river had made him hungry, and at such times a man is likely to think all food that is decent fit for a feast of the gods.

Clifford certainly set an example which his host did not seem very ready to follow; but he made up for his lack on that point by proving an entertainer of no mean order.

Pelham recalled sundry merry supper-parties at which Delmar had been the most brilliant talker of all, and recalled also certain not very amiable feelings in his own heart.

To-day, however he enjoyed himself, though he was the guest of his old rival, who had wrested from him all the prizes for which both had striven, and had passed him in all the sports each had indulged in.

Towards the end of luncheon a note was brought to the young master. Its scent reached Clifford where he sat, and the quick glow his keen gaze noticed came into the dark blue eyes opposite was only a confirmation. Delmar excused himself, and read the note while the servant waited.

"Clifford," said the young man, looking up, "this is an invitation for this afternoon from some friends of mine. Will you join me or have you another engagement? It is two miles off, the other side of the river, but you won't mind that. I can take anyone I like, and I'm sure you will like them."

"I shall be very pleased," said Clifford.

"Say I will come, then," said Delmar to the servant. Then turning to his guest, "I may as well tell you that these people are a Mr. and

Mrs. Elmhurst and their niece, Miss Montagu. Miss Montagu is engaged to me, so you see"—smiling—"I am not quite at liberty to refuse the invitation. What can one say, but yes to a prettily-worded order! Shall we have our cigars here, or on the lawn?"

"The lawn, if I may choose. My dear Delmar, you must allow me to congratulate you!"

"Thanks, very much!"

They went out to the lawn and talked and smoked. Clifford did not find his host's attention wander, nor see him frequently consulting his watch. As he listened to the sweet-toned voice and the language so often unconsciously eloquent, the old feeling of fascination and repulsion began again to creep over him. So many times he had sat and listened, and seen other men absorbed and himself almost forgotten, and half-hated the man who made him feel so little.

He was glad when Delmar, for the first time consulting his watch, said it was time to go to the Elmhursts. But Clifford could not even then detect any relief. He had always thought Delmar would be the reverse of a cold lover; and as they walked through the lanes to the white house, he cogitated whether he seemed cold because passion with him lay too deep for careless moments, and what manner of maiden it was that had chained his restless heart.

CHAPTER II.

THAT white house that had been seen from the river proved to be a long, low, two-storied cottage, of the kind that looks to London eyes the beau idéal of rusticity. It had the proper covering of creepers and green trellis-work round the porch and lattice windows at this time of the year, though this trellis was half hidden by roses and honeysuckles, which always do grow about country houses, at any rate, in stories and on the stage.

The two young men approached it by a sunny but rather dusty lane, and the cool greenness of the garden was refreshing, especially to Clifford, who found the heat a little oppressive. The prospect of shade rejoiced him.

"What a pretty place!" said he.

"You're glad to reach a haven!" said Delmar, who walked as if heat were his life.

"How the deuce did you know that?"

"Oh, it is easy to tell!" said the other, lightly. "Well, I can promise you a welcome. Mr. Elmhurst is the sort of person who would make his enemy welcome once he were under his roof."

"How delightful! I hope I shall not test his Christianity to that extent, and—" said he, glancing up—"if the lady standing at the gate is an inmate of this house, I don't think there would be any occasion for civility."

Delmar did not look up, Clifford felt because his announcement was no news, the more so as he had been sensible of an almost imperceptible quickening of pace.

"A pretty picture of girlish grace,
Set in a frame of flowers,"

came into his head; for the girl at the gate looked the very embodiment of sweetness as she stood there smiling—a bonnie creature, such as men rave over, for whom they will quarrel with their dearest friend, be slaves to, and willing slaves. Yet Delmar, as he reached the gate, only took her outstretched hand—not too warmly then, Clifford thought, laying it down truly enough to the presence of a third person; but then he did not see the look that made up for all seeming coldness. He only guessed it by the responsive glance of the girl's eyes, bright and happy.

"I have taken a liberty," said Albert Delmar, turning towards Clifford, "and brought a college friend I encountered to-day—Mr. Clifford, Miss Montagu."

"It is no liberty," said the girl, holding out her hand; "that is his nonsense, Mr. Clifford. I am sure he has given us all a great pleasure, and I am glad to see you."

"Delmar assured me of a welcome," said Clifford, smiling, "and you, Miss Montagu, have ratified his promise."

"Were you doing us the honour to watch for us, Maddie?" asked Delmar, bending down to her—her pretty head came just a little above his shoulder—and speaking with a softer, richer tone than Pelham had heard before, even from him—"or were we late, and you meant to have the luxury of the first reproach?"

But Maddie—she was never Madeline—laughed and would not answer—only her saucy glance denied and acknowledged at once the truth of the first accusation.

She was certainly the most captivating little maiden that ever broke hearts—all brightness and gaiety, with a hundred winning ways, and using her power so prettily that no man who loved her would ever dream of its being tyranny. Never either, in his wildest moments, would it have entered his head to analyse this fairy-like being; to conjecture what strength, what constancy, what capacity to breast the roughness of life there might be under all this sparkle.

No; he would seek the source of light—what gave its rounded softness to the south wind—what made the deep blue of a summer sea, or the peerless scent of the rose; but try, or even wish, to examine and probe Madeline's unaccountable fascinations, had never once occurred to any one from her babyhood upwards.

Clifford was resolved by Mr. and Mrs. Elmhurst with great cordiality; indeed, he fancied that there was more of that ingredient in their manner towards him than towards Delmar, kind as that was.

He reserved this point for consideration at another time; at present there was tea to discuss (for the family dined early), and that was a pleasure, not from the epicure's point of view, but because it was served on the verandah running along the back of the house, and from whence could be seen glimpses of the river and the purple hills.

Clifford had not been in this company ten minutes without seeing that Madeline was the spoiled pet of her uncle and aunt—genial, hospitable people, whose hearts were too unbalanced by their heads to be precisely the best trainers for children.

Delmar, perhaps out of courtesy to the guest, took rather a secondary position; but though he took little covert notice of Madeline, he seemed to know by intuition when she needed attending to. As for Madeline, she flattered here, there, and everywhere.

It crossed Clifford, however, that she was not best pleased with her lover's apparent coolness; but she did not resent it by firing with the guest. Was it, thought that guest, being inclined to the metaphysical, as he glanced towards the blue-eyed, delicate featured man sitting by Mrs. Elmhurst, that she was afraid to?

"Delmar," said Mr. Elmhurst, when tea was nearly over, and only one or two idly made pretence of emptying their cups, "have you settled about that Highland journey of yours?"

"Yes. I had a letter yesterday."

"Are you going?"

"That's what I have decided on."

A half-breathed "Oh!" from Madeline, with an instant quick colour as she met Clifford's eye; and Mrs. Elmhurst asked how long would he be gone!

"About a month, I think. But we are talking enigmas to Clifford. Do you remember," he went on, addressing himself to Pelham, "that I once told you a small property would come to me through my mother? There are some intricate business matters connected with it now, in consequence of my father's death, as he had it during his life, and I have to see to them."

"And take a journey out of the pale of civilisation," said Clifford. "My dear fellow, you have my fullest sympathy."

"I am sure he needs it," said Madeline. "Do you know what that place is like, Mr. Clifford? It's right away in the mountains, in the wildest place. They have no railway within twenty miles; they're snowed up half the year, and the other half the rains come down, and the mountain streams are so swollen the people are shut in

as if they were in the Ark. And that's just what will happen to Albert if he will go!"

"Is isn't a question of will, Maddle; it's must," said Albert, who had listened amused to her rapid inditement against poor Stratharlie.

"Must! Why won't you sell it?"

"Oh, Maddle!" in a duet from uncle and aunt, but Delmar said nothing, biting his lip.

"Sell it!" repeated Clifford, dubiously. "Would you really advise that, Miss Montagu? Think of the shooting for sportsmen; the scenery for lovers of beauty; the romance of those wonderful Highlands teeming with legends and annals of history."

"Oh!" said the girl, in her light way, "Albert (there were no formalities in this family) doesn't bring forward any of those reasons. He's a good shot, but not much of a sportsman; at least, he won't shoot stage, and that's all you get at Stratharlie. He says he tried it once, and the brute looked so splendid he couldn't touch it. As to scenery, he's not often up there; and I'm sure—oh!"

A start and exclamation finished her speech abruptly. A hand on her shoulder, light as a feather, but how imperative! and Madeline looked up half-frightened.

"Let the subject drop, Maddle!" said Delmar, too low for even Pelham to hear. There was some entreaty—more command in the voice, and a dark enough cloud on the brow. Then he lifted himself, moved his hand, and said, carelessly,—

"I am afraid Stratharlie won't interest Clifford. My fate is fixed so far, so suppose we go on the lawn!"

These words effectually broke up the little party. Madeline, picking up a straw hat, took care not to walk beside Delmar, as they all countered on to the lawn. She was angry, but afraid to show it, except by avoiding him, and took refuge in silence.

What had she said he didn't like, unless it was that she wanted him to sell Stratharlie? And she surely might express a wish.

Presently she contrived to slip away from the others, she flattered herself unnoticed, but two there certainly missed her—and one would have given a good deal to be able to follow her; but there was no opportunity till Mrs. Elmhurst said she was going back to the house. He offered to escort her; and Mr. Elmhurst seized the opportunity to do what is dear to every Englishman's heart—show his guest his horses.

Nothing loth, the two gentlemen departed to the stables, and Delmar, curling as well as he could—his impatience, safely landed Mrs. Elmhurst in the drawing-room. Then he was free to find Madeline; and now the man seemed changed. Clifford would never have called him a cold lover if he had seen him at this moment. The self-restraint pride imposed was relaxed.

He came behind Madeline, as she sat on a garden-bench, in a walk overhung with trees, laying both his hands on her shoulders.—

"Lina," he said, softly, as she looked up at him, startled. Lina—not Maddle, not the name other people used, but one peculiar to himself—his own, kept only for moments such as these; and it fell from his lips so tenderly, so pleadingly. "Forgive me!" it said—that one name.

The girl saw her power—she knew he was in soul at her feet—yet dared she use that power! She had a vague sense that a word or a look would change him, and he would walk straight back to the house.

She hesitated.

To her a too ready forgiveness was a neglect of opportunities, and a derogation of dignity; and he, mistaking her hesitation, thought she had been too hurt to forgive at once, for his love blinded him.

"Don't be angry still, darling!" he said, drawing her head back against him, so that he could see her face. "I was so pained that I was too heavy, I know; and you are such a tender little thing that it is so easy for me to hurt! May I take forgiveness?"

"What had I done?" said the girl, smiling a little. "Poor me! I don't understand you always, you know, Albert."

"You asked me once before about Stratharlie, Maddle, and I said I would never sell it."

"Why?"

It was his turn now to hesitate. Somehow it was not easy to tell her those things that lay very near his heart.

"You won't tell me?" she said, reproachfully.

"Yes, Lina, I will!" He drew his fingers two or three times through the brown hair before he said,—

"You and my mother, Lina, were the only people who ever cared for me, or I for them; and mother was born at Stratharlie, and lived there as a child. I tried her love enough; there are some bitter memories connected with her I would do away with if I could. So I cannot tell it. I would, for you, if I could, but I cannot!"

Maddle was silent, because she did not know what to say—her sympathy was not deep enough to make a look, or even that silence suffice. He took her sympathy for granted; but if he had been asked, he could not have said he was conscious of exactly feeling it.

"They are all sunny thoughts I have with you," he went on, still with that caressing movement through her hair, "except when I wonder why you ever loved me. Perhaps I shall make you unhappy. I am not gentle enough for you, Lina, but I will try and learn if you will teach me."

There was a wistful longing in the last words. It was easy to see why he had loved this embodiment of brightness.

"Oh!" said she, shaking her head. "you'll never learn from me."

"Why not, Maddle?"

"I don't know," the girl answered, looking at him half-doubtfully, "but you never would. And now you are going away what chance is there! That's why I don't like Stratharlie. And you'll be smothered in business, and forget to write."

"No, Lina—"

"There, don't protest; and I shall have to flirt with all the flirtable people about to console myself—What, you smile; I thought you were so jealous tempered!"

"Who told you that, Maddle? I daresay I could be jealous enough where I had no certainty, but not where you are concerned."

She twisted herself round.

"Come and sit down here—I can't see you there," she said.

"You haven't given me formal forgiveness yet, Lina. I'm going to take it first," said Delmar, and bending down kissed the girl's smiling lips, "and then I'll come," which he did.

"Now," said Maddle, "what do you mean? Suppose someone told you—it's only supposition, you know—that I was flirting awfully, and I didn't write. Wouldn't you believe it?"

"Not if someone else said it, of course not. I should not think you had forgotten me for an idle tale. I could doubt readily enough where I did not love. But why do you talk so, Lina! It is all jest, I know."

"And you are taking it in earnest, and positively looking worried over it, as you do half the things I call fun. Why are you so different from me! You talk about my teaching you, but I am sure you haven't learned anything from me ever since I've known you—and that is—how long? I forget."

"Three months, Maddle."

"Is it? Well, please bear with my jest even if you don't quite like it. I want to know what would make you doubt me?"

The wifely girl knew very well he shrank from jest on some things. She saw now he would rather have dropped the subject, but she delighted in her own way, and he really was much too sensitive.

Delmar did not answer directly, and Maddle watched him half curiously.

"Lina," he said at last, "a little further on—I remember the exact spot—you and I once stood together, and these little hands"—he took them in his—"were in mine, and you just looked up at me once and whispered, 'I love you.'"

When your lips say, or this hand writes, 'I love you no longer,' then I will believe you are false."

His voice had trembled a little—the full, intense nature thrilled to the recollection of that golden hour—shuddered at the mere vision of the broken troth.

Maddle sat looking at him with wide open eyes, half frightened at the strength of the feeling she had so carelessly roused. But she was warm-hearted, and the tears came into her eyes.

"I should never say that, Albert," she said, earnestly. "I will always be your own little Lina."

She looked so sweet and loving it was worth while to have endured the pain of her girlish nonsense.

There was a bright moment of utter silence, while his thoughts sprang forward to the happy future life when his darling would never leave him; and Maddle, as her head nestled against his shoulder, thought proudly he did love her very dearly, and, after all, he was much handsomer than that Mr. Clifford.

They reached the drawing-room before the gentlemen had returned, to find it lighted, and Mrs. Elmhurst awaiting them. Maddle throwing down her hat, went at once to the piano, and playing with a light crisp touch, broke out with an old ballad. The girl's voice was like a bird's, and full of the ring of joy. There was nothing of gloom in her young life, and not in her nature the melancholy that partially takes the place of knowledge.

Pelham Clifford paused in the shadow of the doorway, unwilling to interrupt the singer; but as the high thrilling voice ceased, he stepped forward.—

"Miss Montagu," said he, smiling, "I have always been told there are no nightingales in this neighbourhood."

Maddle blushed and laughed, and her uncle patting her shoulder fondly said,—"Ah, Mr. Clifford, I always told Maddle we had one, but we can't keep it, you see."

"Song birds mustn't be captives," said the girl, merrily. "Now someone else. Come and sing—Mr. Clifford!"

"I would rather hear you again," he said, bowing with an involuntary look of genuine admiration. She dropped her eyes and took her seat again; and Mrs. Elmhurst, beside whom Delmar was standing listening intently to the singer, whispered to him,—

"She is singing charmingly to-night, but I wonder you care for it so much. Your taste in music goes far higher than hers."

"Maddle does well what she attempts, and she only attempts what she can do," was the answer, containing, as he knew, only half a truth. That was not the secret why he had a strange, deep pleasure in hearing what his critical taste would have cared very little for from anyone else. Perhaps it was more than half that very joyousness, that abandon, that charmed him, and the rest was—why because it was Maddle. But when Maddle called on him he went forward obediently. She got up.

"Won't you play for me, Maddle?" he said.

"No—I can't. I'm all very well for my light songs, but your singing and my playing don't go together. You must play for yourself. Mr. Clifford, you'll see what I mean. Albert, sing the Erl-König."

She took a seat a little way off, while Clifford stood within an easy range of her. She was not thinking much of the song, she was looking at the two men. Delmar had no music, and he played the difficult accompaniment to the most matchless of German ballads as superbly as he sang it. The voice—a high baritone, with the timbre of a tenor in the upper register—was, like himself, rich, powerful, full of passion. All his soul seemed flung into the wild despair of the father, as nearer and nearer comes the terrible foe, who witches away his child's spirit.

But Maddle was thinking of what she had thought in the garden—that he was handsomer than Mr. Clifford. Was she right?

She was at that age when young ladies are liable to exalt throws and sneers; and Pelham Clifford, about Delmar's height, was, though not

robust, of larger build. He was dark, too, black-haired and black-eyed, and being fair herself, Maddie had a slight weakness in this direction.

Clifford had a more quiet, conventional face than Delmar. He looked what he was—clever beyond the average; but there were no perplexities about him, no rapid changes of expression, no impression given of slumbering forces of unknown intensity.

Maddie sighed unconsciously, but as the singer just then rose, and everyone thanked him, but quietly, like true musicians, she challenged Clifford—was she not right about the accompaniment? He politely disclaimed her self-depreciation; but, when the evening was over, and after kindly invitations to come again from the Elmhursts, he found himself in his own room as the inn, his thoughts ran thus,—

"That was a society life—she was quite right. The incongruity would be too glaring. The man is all fire, only half suppressed—she a creature all softness and light. What in the world made him fall in love with her unless for the sake of contrast? Do they ever expect to run easy in harness? She has few moods, he a hundred, not one of which she quite understands. The most absurd thing to mate those two. She is fond of him now—like a good many people, though I never could see the attraction; but I very much doubt if it will last. They're too much like fire and snow. She is charming, certainly. I dare say his beauty has taken her—as it did everyone at college, though I am sure he never conciliated people unless he liked to—haughty beggar! Pretty racket he was, too! I wonder if the old people know that. Of course she doesn't, and possibly thinks him a saint. He might be very easily, if saintship depended on golden hair. But, saint or not, I shouldn't like my sister to marry him—he'd be sure to break her heart somehow, and not care much either."

Perhaps Mr. Clifford was prejudiced. It is not easy to judge fairly the man who is always just a few steps ahead of you, no effort of yours enabling you to get the best of him.

(To be continued.)

CALVERT'S Carbolic preparations for the toilet and the house are so well known and highly valued that our readers will be pleased to hear of two new specialities they have just placed on the market. One is Calvert's Shampoo Soap; a delightful and refreshing soap that thoroughly cleanses the scalp, and renders the hair glossy and exquisitely soft to the touch. This soap, with directions for use, is put up in little china pots of dainty form and colouring; and one of these little vases would form a pleasing ornament to the toilet-table. The other is a preparation similar to their "Prickly Heat" soap, and is especially adapted for use in the bath. This will be found an acquisition to every lady's toilet.

AMONG the first things to impress a stranger in Mantia are the horses. Descended from horses brought from Mexico, they have become much smaller, while they are also much more shapely. There is nothing of the pony in their shape, though in size they range between forty-eight and fifty-two inches. At first it looks absurd to see them ridden by big men whose stirrups hang down to the horses' knees, but it is soon seen that they easily carry a rider weighing two hundred pounds. The foreigners have a jockey club, which holds two meetings a year at the beautiful turf track at Santa Mesa. To avoid sharp practice members of the club only are eligible to ride. This necessitates a scale of weights starting at one hundred and thirty-two pounds and rising to one hundred and fifty-four pounds. It demonstrates the speed and strength of these miniature horses that a mile has been run in 2.10 by a pony carrying one hundred and fifty pounds. Only stallions are used. Mares cannot even be brought into the city. Nobody walks; everybody rides, and on any special festive thousands of carriages fill the streets. It is doubtful if there is a city in the world that can turn out half the number of private vehicles in proportion to the population.

BLONDE INDIANS.—One of the mysteries of Mexico is presented by the Maya Indians, who inhabit the Sierra Madre Mountains in the lower part of Sonora. They have fair skins, blue eyes and light hair, and students of ethnology have always been puzzled to account for them. There is a tradition, however, that these Indians are the descendants of the crew and passengers of a Swedish vessel wrecked on the Mexican coast centuries before Columbus discovered the New World. But this tradition is founded on nothing more substantial than a folklore tale, current among them that their ancestors came over the big salt water hundreds of moons ago. The Mexicans have never been able to conquer this people. Nominally, indeed, they are under Mexican rule, but really they are governed by their own chief, and whenever the Mexican Government has interfered with them they have taken up arms, getting the best of the fight every time. Their nearest Indian neighbours are the Yaquis, and these two war-like tribes have reciprocally down to a fine point. Each helps the other when the Mexicans attack them. The Mayas live principally by the chase, although they cultivate some corn and garden produce. The men are large and well-formed, and some of the women are handsome blondes with great symmetry of person.

FLORIDA SPIDERS AND CRABS.—On the borders of the Everglades you often see a large yellow spider. He swings a strong web from two plant twigs on each side of a path or clear space of ground and waits for his prey. The web is in the shape of a hammock and tapers at each end to a fine point though quite broad in the middle. The bright colour of the owner seems to mark him out for destruction—he is clearly defined against the white sand or dead leaves, and you wonder what he would do for defence in case of attack. Approach quietly and he watches you intently. Now raises your hand suddenly, and he will disappear! While you are wondering what became of him you see first a blur where he had been, then several spiders, then you catch sight again of the yellow ball you noticed at first. Repeat the performance, and the strange effect is renewed. The disappearance is absolute—there can be no doubt about it—and the little magician trusts to it entirely for his protection. How is it done? As soon as he is threatened he starts the vibrations of his airy hammock. These become too rapid for the eye to follow, and he vanishes. As these become slower you see a blur, and then several spiders as the eye catches him at different points of his wings, until finally he rests before you. Haunting the rookeries of the birds in the southern part of the peninsula is a large blue crab. He makes a hole in the ground usually under a log, and when he hears a noise elevates his head and protrudes his eyes with startling effect. He is able to take care of himself, for his pincers are powerful, and his shell is hard—he is often as large as a saucer. There is perpetual war between him and the birds. He wanders among the nests at night and appropriates the bits of fish left by the nestlings, and the young themselves if he can find a mother off her guard. But he has to be sly or he is killed by the stroke of a bayonet bill, and eaten in his turn. When the plume hunters have driven off or destroyed the parents of a rookery, these crabs warm out and devour the orphan young in short order. But while the mothers are allowed to do their duty, the crabs are ideal scavengers, and devour the refuse as well as the insects that infest the bird cities. Their bright colours, like those of the tiger, make them less dangerous than their appetite would otherwise be.



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ONE of the latest applications of the penny-in-the-slot principle is a bicycle pump. As soon as the filled tyre is removed, a lever locks the pump, which can be caused to work again only by dropping in another penny.

FACETIÆ.

THE turtle may be slow, but he usually gets there in time for the soup.

MR. LATENTATE: "I'm going to kiss you when I go." Miss Weary: "Do it now, while I'm still young."

SHE: "She possesses untold wealth!" He: "Bah! The woman never yet lived who could possess untold wealth."

WIFE (enthusiastically): "How much do you think we took in at the bazaar!" Husband (quietly): "How many, you mean!"

Mrs. NEWMA: "I feel uneasy. The baby has not cried all day." Mr. Newpa: "So do I. It will probably cry all night."

ETHEL: "Pa, is it love that makes the world go round?" Pa (lured to a bachelors' supper over night, sadly): "No, dear; not always."

"THEY say the way to please a man is to talk to him about himself." "No, the way to please him is to let him talk to you about himself."

YOUNG DAD (enthusiastically): "I say, old man, have I told you the last bright saying of my youngster?" Friend (wearily): "I hope so."

MILLY: "I understand that something has parted you and D.L.K. Is it anything serious?" Minnie: "Well, yes. It's the Pacific Ocean."

"HERE are the eggs, mum." "Lay them on the table." "I'm not the hen, mum; I'm the grocer's boy."

"He is wedded to his art." Then that wasn't true what I heard! "What was that?" "Why, that he is a Bachelor of Arts."

NANCE: "Jack Morton proposes in this letter. I wonder if he really loves me; he has only known me a week!" The Brother: "Oh, then, perhaps he does."

MISTRESS: "Mary, there's dust on the piano at least six weeks old." Mary: "But, miss, that's the fault of the last maid—I've only been here three weeks."

INDIGNANT WOMAN: "This dog I bought of you came near eating my little girl the other day." Dealer: "Well, you said you wanted a dog that was fond of children, didn't you?"

THE OLD FRIEND: "I don't believe you realize the dignity of your position." The New Millionaire: "Don't have to. I've a butler hired for that."

"I'll make a fortune out of my new music-box. You put a penny in the slot and—"

"And the thing plays a popular air?" "No; it stops playing one."

BLISTER: "I'd like to see that new device of yours for preventing the theft of a watch." Kister: "Can't show it. It was stolen from me yesterday by a pickpocket."

HA (angrily): "Was there any fool who was sweet on you before I married you?" She: "Yes, one." "I'm sorry you rejected him."

"But I didn't reject him; I married him."

MR. SKALOVN (at his seashore cottage): "My dear, please tell your daughter to sing something less doleful!" Mrs. Sealove: "That is not our daughter, my love; that is the foghorn."

"Excuse pardon, are you McOrbit, the prize-fighter?" "Young fellow, I am a pugilist, not a prize-fighter. Are you one of them reporters?"

"No, sir; I'm a journalist."

"THAT was a curious case of the bridegroom who was married on Tuesday and hanged himself on Thursday." "Yes, but why did he waste Wednesday?"

Mrs. POLYTEX: "Oh, here is the picture of such a lovely party-coat in this magazine!" Mr. Polytex: "What is a party-coat? Something that can be turned!"

YOUNG DUKE: "It's no use, Nelly dear, we can't marry; my people won't hear of it." Chorus Girl: "Oh, yes, they will, though, when the breach of promise comes on."

"THAT was a good sermon that Dr. Binks preached this morning." "Excellent. It would have been almost perfect if the doctor hadn't interpolated a few sentences of his own."

Mrs. N. PECK: "Papa always was a great joker." Mr. N. Peck: "That's so. When I asked him for you he said: 'Take her, young man, and be happy.'"

"If you will let me have those roses I will give you a kiss for each of them. But why do you run away! How rude of you!" He: "One moment; I am going for some more roses!"

Mrs. MURPHY: "The sweet little babies!" Mrs. Dugan: "They do be thot, an' ut's twins they are." Mrs. Murphy: "Yes don't say! An' are the both av thim yours!"

PASSENGER (on outgoing steamer): "The steerage appears to be empty. Don't immigrants ever return to Europe?" Captain: "Often. But they go in the first cabin."

DOMESTIC YOUNG LADY (making pie): "Frank, the kitchen's no place for you. Has dough such an attraction for you?" Clever Youth: "It isn't the dough, cousin; it's the dear."

THE HEIRNESS: "The man I marry must be very handsome, afraid of nothing, and—"

Mamma: "Ethel, what do you mean by shouting in that disgraceful fashion! See how quiet Willie is." Ethel: "Of course he's quiet; that's our game. He's papa coming home late, and I'm young."

AFRICAN EXPLORER (dumbfounded): "What, you, Clarence Vere de Vere, in the heart of darkest Africa?" Clarence Vere de Vere: "I'm wearing the necktie Miss Darling gave me for Christmas. I promised her I would, you know."

PORTER ON GREAT SLOW SOUTHERN RAILWAY: "Passengers is not allowed on the footboard, sir, when the train is in motion." Passenger: "Beg pardon; I will go in. I did not notice that the train was in motion."

REPORTERS are often unconsciously satirical. A morning paper says in an obituary: "Mr. — was an estimable citizen. He lived uprightly. He died with perfect resignation. He had recently been married."

MR. STAYLATE: "I hear your mother's step on the stairs, and I shall be able to bid her good-night." Sleepy Beauty (wearily): "It can't be mother. She's a late sleeper. Probably it is the girl coming down to light the fire."

MR. SCATTERTON prides himself on being strictly impartial. "Yes," answered the unamiable man, "I once went hunting with him. He didn't seem to care whether he hit the rabbit, the dog, or one of his friends."

A TEMPERANCE advocate observed an Irishman about to enter a public-house door. "Do you know the devil is going in with you, my man?" said he. "Arrah, he needn't trouble himself," replied Pat. "I've only tuppence."

WIFE (reading a letter from a distant friend): "How strange! Elfrida doesn't say whether her baby is a boy or girl." Husband: "But doesn't she say it is beginning to talk?" Wife: "Yes." Husband: "Then it's a girl."

DOCTOR: "What did Colonel Stillwell say about the branded peaches we sent to cheer his convalescence?" Maid: "He said he was afraid he wasn't strong enough to eat the fruit; but he appreciated the spirit in which it was sent."

"So," concluded the advanced woman, after expounding for thirty minutes her objections to men in general, for the benefit of the gentleman next her at dinner, "you see I am quite plain."

"Yes," answered the horrid man, "I see you are." And the advanced woman was so angry that she ate two courses without saying a word.

It was intended as a gentle hint. "Our rule here," he said, "is to pay as you go." "Quite right," replied the other, pleasantly; "but I am not going yet."

"How well the baby talks!" remarked the visitor. "Doesn't he!" replied the proud father. "What is he saying?" asked the visitor. "Um—well," replied the proud father hesitatingly, "I—I fancy you'd better ask his mother about that!"

IRRITATED FRENCHMAN (to Briton who has mistaken him for a waiter): "Sir-r, you haf gr-r-rossly insulted me. There is my card. My seconds vill wait upon you, sir-r-r." Briton: "Never mind your seconds, Frenchy. You can wait upon me just as well. Pass me the Worcester-shire sauce, and be quick about it, too."

"Yes," said the business man, "I have given up trying to collect that little bill from Blikins. You see, he is a pretty big fellow, and he used to throw my collectors out." "Then why didn't you employ a woman collector? He couldn't do that to a woman." "That's what I thought. So I got one and sent her around, but she never came back." "Why not?" "He married her."

EDITOR'S WIFE (laying down scraps of his paper): "Why do you print such a lot of trash?" Editor: "My dear, I do not print a paper to please cultured readers like you and me. I try to please the general public." Bridges (in the kitchen): "Any good readin' in th' master's noosepaper to-day, Mary?" Mary (chief dishwasher): "No, Biddy; nawthin' but trash."

MR. SAMSON (passionately): "I love you devotedly, Miss Chumley; but my pecuniary affairs have prevented my making a declaration until now. But I have put enough away now to feel justified in asking you to become my wife." Miss Chumley (hesitatingly but sweetly): "I confess that I am not wholly indifferent to you, but—"

"But what, dear?" "Would you mind telling how much you have put away?"

Mrs. VERYRICH: "You paint pictures to order, don't you?" Great Artist: "Yes, madam." Mrs. Veryrich: "Well, I want a landscape, with lots of deer, and ducks, and quail, and birds, and cattle, and sheep, and pigs, and so on, you know, and put a lake and an ocean in it—fresh and salt water, you know; and be sure to have plenty of fish swimming about, because it's for the dining-room."

THE old man lay dying, and his wife and relations were gathered round his bed. "Martha," came in trembling tones from the occupant of the bed, "do not forget after I am gone that old Mr. Brown owes us £5 for that hay I sold him."

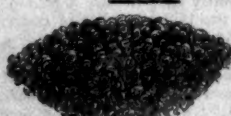
"Sensible to the last, sensible to the last!" the old lady said. A few minutes' silence, and once more the old man spoke. "Martha, don't you forget that we owe Mr. Jones, the miller, £8 for the last lot of corn we had from him."

"Raving again, raving again!" cried the wife, bursting into tears.

THE cyclist was a stranger in literary Fleet-street. That was evident from the cautious manner in which he picked his way through the half-empty thoroughfare. It was evening. The penny-a-liner approached him. "Sir," said he, "your beacon has ceased its functions." "Sir!" gasped the cyclist. "Your illuminator, I say, is shrouded in unmitigated oblivion." "Really! but I don't quite—" "The effulgence of your radiator has advanced." "My dear fellow I—" "The transversal ether oscillations in your incandescence have been discontinued." Just then an unsophisticated little paper boy shouted across the street: "Hey, mister, yer lamp's out!"

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SOCIETY.

It has become quite the fashion for women to appear in the stalls at theatres without gloves or merely holding them in their hands.

THE Empress of Germany's private wedding present to her relations always consists of a very plain travelling clock, for she values among all other virtues that of punctuality.

THE Queen will start for the Riviera on March 8th or 9th. Her Majesty intends to be absent from England for between five and six weeks.

PRINCESS ALICE OF ALBANY will be sixteen next month. Her Royal Highness is a very simple, natural-mannered child, with decided artistic talent. The Duchess has brought her up very simply, and she goes to bed each night at a quarter to nine o'clock. The Duchess of Albany sets a good example to her children in that her Royal Highness is never idle.

THE Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse will be absent from Germany until the end of April. The Grand Duke and Grand Duchess are to spend two or three weeks at Ostro, after which they will proceed on a voyage up the Nile; and on their way back to Europe they are to pay a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Sparta at Athens.

PRINCESS HENRI OF BATTENBERG will accompany the Queen to the Riviera. Her Royal Highness's three younger children will go at the same time, and Prince Alexander, who is now at his school at Lywood, will go to Orléans for Easter. He is a very fine lad, and is said to have a great wish to be a soldier, which is likely to be gratified. Princess Victoria Eugénie is a remarkably pretty child.

THE German Emperor's yacht, *Hohenzollern*, is a floating palace. She is constructed of steel, and steams easily nineteen knots an hour. The private cabins are extremely luxurious, and the emperor has a bed, dressing, bath and smoking-room, all in one suite. The emperor's sleeping-cabin is hung with grey, her favourite colour, even the bedstead being of nickel. The dining saloon is also upholstered in grey. During the fine weather the Emperor and Empress take their meals on the upper deck.

THE Empress Dowager of China, who has taken charge of things recently, has large feet—that is, her feet are of the natural size. The Manchou race, from which she comes, do not compress the feet of their girl babies like the mothers in Southern China, but allow them to grow with the rest of the body. The Manchus are also of larger stature than the Chinese of the southern provinces, and are more vigorous in character as well as in physique. The influence of the Empress has always been against foot-binding.

THE Queen intends to open the new buildings of the South Kensington Museum early in May, and there will be a semi-state carriage procession from Buckingham Palace and an elaborate ceremonial. The Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, Prince and Princess Christian, Princess Louise, Princess Beatrice, the Duke and Duchess of York, and the Duke of Cambridge will all be present. The function will probably be fixed for Wednesday, May 10th.

THE Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria conferred the Grand Cross of the new Order which he has instituted in memory of his beloved wife, who was so cruelly assassinated last September, upon the Queen first, and upon her daughter the Empress Frederic, and her granddaughter the Empress of Russia next. Only Sovereigns and Princesses will be the recipients of the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Elizabeth, which consists of a red and white enamelled cross. The Queen-Regent of Spain, the Crown Princess of Denmark, the Dowager Empress of Russia and her sister the Duchess of Cumberland, are also to be honoured with the decoration, to which a sympathetic interest will attach in their eyes, since to all these Royal ladies the unhappy Empress in whose memory it is founded was a personal and much admired friend.

STATISTICS.

BLIND men outnumber blind women by two to one.

THERE are said to be sold about 25,000,000 paper collars in the United States each year.

THE value of the average annual production of the earth has been estimated at £2,000,000,000.

GEMS.

A SMILE can open a way more quickly than a sword.

TRUE merit is like a river, the deeper it is the less noise it makes.

FIDELITY in little things is one of the surest tests of character.

THE real character of any act depends very largely upon the motive of the actor.

ALL brave men are brave in initiative; but the courage which enables them to succeed where others dare not even attempt is never so potent as when it leads to entire self-forgetfulness.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

STEAMED BACON.—Wash and scrape the piece you intend cooking. Put it over the fire in a steamer over boiling water and steam till quite tender. Allow about forty minutes to each pound, and if very large give it an extra half-hour. When cooked peel off the thick outside skin and sprinkle thickly with raspings or browned crumbs.

BEEF ROLL.—Mince one pound of fresh beef very finely, beat it well, or pound it if preferred; add three large, plain (not sweet ones, of course) biscuits, or finely-grated crumbs of stale bread, two eggs, herbs, and a little onion, if liked; pepper and salt to taste. Mix all together; put some bits of butter on it and some well-buttered paper round it, and bake for an hour. Serve with good gravy, and tomatoes, if liked. This roll is also very good cold; it can be cut in quite thin slices, and makes very good sandwiches.

HAM OMELET.—Break three eggs into a basin, add about half a teaspoonful of salt, and a quarter of a teaspoonful of pepper. Well whisk the eggs. Chop very finely enough lean cooked ham to make two tablespoonfuls. Add to it the eggs. Wipe the omelet-pan, make it hot, and then put in one ounce of butter and let it get very hot. When the butter is ready, pour in the contents of the basin; immediately stir it round well with a wooden spoon; when it is beginning to set, tip the pan up towards you, scrape all towards the handle of the pan, shape it a little with your spoon; then in about ten seconds roll it over to the opposite side of the pan till the outside is set and a pale brown; place it on a hot dish, and serve at once.

DUCHESSE PUDDING.—A stale Savoy or sponge cake, tinned fruit, castor sugar, half a pint of cream, and a little vanilla and cochineal. Cut the top slice off and hollow the cake out carefully till you have a case, but take care you do not run your knife through. At the bottom of this case put a good layer of tinned fruit. Drudge on this a little castor sugar. Now cut the top slice into large squares and lay them on the fruit; next another layer of fruit. After the second layer, whip gently till stiff half a pint of cream. Mix with it two tablespoonfuls of castor sugar and some vanilla. Colour one-half with a drop or two of cochineal, leaving the remainder plain. Fill in the case in layers—first pink, then white, and so on. Arrange some of both colours roughly on the top. Then shake over a few chopped pistachio nuts, and pour round a little of the fruit-syrup or custard. Serve immediately.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE tongue of a full-grown whale measures 20 ft. in length.

ONE of the curiosities of the Isle of Mahé, in the Indian Ocean, is the chapel that is built of coral.

THE elephant beetle of Venezuela is the biggest of its species. An average specimen of this insect, when full grown, weighs half a pound.

COCO is Spanish for bogey, and it is said the coconut was thus named for its resemblance to a distorted human face.

THE Kurds and Cosackos believe that Mount Ararat is guarded by an unearthly being, and that no man can ascend the peak and live.

A THEATRICAL car is the latest in the way of railway novelties in America. Light shows are to be put on some of the fast trains early in the spring.

THE wives of Siamese noblemen cut their hair so that it sticks straight up from their heads. The average length of it is about one and a half inches.

THERE are parts of Spain where the hat is unknown except in pictures. The men, when they need a covering, tie up their heads, and the women use flowers.

A CURIOUS thing about the calendar is the fact that no century can begin on Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday. The same calendar, too, can be used every twenty years.

ELEPHANTS have only eight teeth—two below and two above on each side. An elephant's "baby teeth" fall out when the animal is about fourteen years old, and a new set grows.

MORE men have died and are buried in the Isthmus of Panama, along the line of the proposed canal, than on any other equal amount of territory in the world.

TATTOOED dogs are now the fashion. A coat-of-arms or a monogram is marked on the throat or breast of the animal. The process is made almost painless by the use of cocaine.

LLAMAS are the chief carriers in Central Peru. The usual load for an animal is about 100 lbs. If you put upon his back more than he can easily carry, he quietly kneels, and will not budge until the load is reduced.

UNTAMED camels are not the docile creatures they are taught to become after months of breaking. In the wild state they are extremely vicious, and can kick harder, higher, swifter, and oftener than a donkey.

DURING the first day of her married life a Korean bride must not speak, even to her husband. It is considered a shocking breach of etiquette. But the next morning she is permitted to give free rein to her tongue, and may jabber thereafter to her heart's content.

EACH member of the Chinese cavalry receives about 15s. a month, and out of this he is required to furnish fodder for his horse. In case of the death or disability of the animal he must supply a new one at his own expense. The Chinese cavalier is therefore careful of his horse.

THE largest "sacred oxen" of Ceylon never exceed thirty inches in height. Strangers are much impressed by the sight of four of these little oxen, harnessed to a two-wheeled cart, laden with merchandise, and with a proud driver comfortably seated behind them.

SUGAR will soon form part of the regular rations of the German soldier. Experiments, in which some were subjected to the sugar diet, and others received the ordinary rations, showed that the weight of the sugar men increased during the manœuvres more than that of the men on the ordinary ration. It was proved that during long marches the feelings of hunger could be kept down for a longer time by the use of sugar, that the sugar people suffered less from thirst than the others, and that a few pieces of sugar sufficed to still thirst for a considerable time. It was also observed that symptoms of exhaustion or of sunstroke were quickly overcome by a small ration of sugar.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JEAN.—The best chance would be at Somerset House. **IMBROGLIO.**—"Enclose" and "enclose" are equally permissible. **MUMMY.**—Among the Egyptians, embalming ceased about 700 A.D. **A. M. Y.**—You may now get to Australia for about 210 shillings fare. **SMITH.**—Bar and Cox was written by the late John Madison Morton. **ASPIRANT FOR FAME.**—It should be sent flat, or folded in the middle of the sheet only. **JUGGERS.**—If it is his own he can dispose of it as he pleases, like the rest of his property. **YANKEE DOODLE.**—War was declared between Spain and the United States April 21st, 1898. **TOMMY ATKINS.**—The song is doubtless of Irish origin, and seems to have dated from 1798. **ROSE'S TRUE LOVE.**—First decide what corps you would prefer, and then communicate with the adjutant. **DACIA.**—Rome reached its greatest size during the fourth century, when the total population was about 2,600,000. **S. M.**—Boiled linseed oil is the simplest polish known. It should be boiled the day before you need it, as it must be quite cold. **EMIGRANT.**—Your best course would be to make inquiry at the Emigrants' Information Office, Broadway, Westminster. **A WORKING READER.**—You had better say to your lover that you intend to inform your parents of the engagement at once, and do so. **ONE OF THE FAMILY.**—If a woman dies intestate all her estate, not otherwise settled, goes to her husband. Her brother has no prior claim. **DIMINISHED PAUL.**—If you find, in your heart of heart, that you do not love the young man, do not marry him, however much he may love you. **IVY.**—Powdered gums—rose or whiting and lemon—will remove wrinkles from bone or ivory knife handles. The latter is best for ivory. **READER.**—The largest existing library is the National Library of Paris. It contains forty miles of shelves, holding fourteen hundred thousand books. **ANXIOUS.**—We should advise you to see an oculist, and have your eyes examined. The eyes are probably of different focus, and require different glasses. **LETTY HOGWITZ.**—Coconut shells make excellent fuel, especially as fire-lighters, the enormous amount of oil they contain causing them to take fire at once. **MILLIE'S BROTHER.**—A man when walking with a lady should always keep on the outside, and if she bows to a friend he should raise his hat, even though the friend is a stranger to him. **O. P.**—Oil that has soaked into a carpet may be taken out by laying a thick piece of blotting paper over it and pressing with a hot flatiron; repeat the operation, using a fresh piece of paper each time. **SHAG STACHE.**—You may obtain proficiency after years of struggling, but the chances are that you will never rise above the lower ranks. You will also find that it is a laborious life, full of disappointments and regrets. **KATHLEEN.**—Grants are made by the Queen from her privy purse to mothers of triplets, and this is usually termed the Royal bounty; then there is a literary fund out of which pensions are paid to poor literary people or relatives. **ROSEBERRY.**—When a pen has become so corroded as to be useless it can be made good as new by holding it in the flame of a gas jet for half a minute, then drop it in cold water; take it out, wipe it clean and it will be ready for use again. **SCHROEDER.**—If your voice is really a good one, you will find that the money you spend upon its cultivation will amply repay you; but you should get the advice of some experienced singer before you take any decided steps in the matter. **PROVERB.**—Horseback exercise possesses, according to some physicians, the faculty of both increasing and retarding weight. If meals are taken immediately after riding additional flesh is gained, otherwise a decrease of flesh results. **O. H. T.**—Four one gallon of boiling water on one pound of loaf sugar, half an ounce of ginger and one ounce of cream of tartar. When nearly cold add a tablespoonful of yeast. Strain and bottle, and in six hours it will be fit for use. **DIAM.**—Diamonds are cut in three different forms—the rose, the brilliant, and the table, of which the second is the prettiest. It is a double pyramid or cone of which the top is cut off to form a large plane, and the bottom, directly opposite, is a small plane. **J. P.**—First scrub it clean, then remove as much of the old paint as possible by sandpapering it, and when you have got it nice and smooth apply the new enamel. Three coats of this will be needed, and it must be applied as thinly and evenly as possible, and each coat allowed to dry thoroughly before the next is applied.

POOR.—It is said that a good way to prevent shoes from squeaking is to pour a small quantity of sweet or linseed oil upon a flat surface and allow the shoes to stand upon it over night. Another plan is to have one or two wooden pegs driven into the centre of the sole. **S. R. S.**—If you will write to the Secretary to Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, S.W., regarding the qualifications for female factory inspectors, with probable date of next examination, the particulars will be sent to you free in printed form. **VILLAGE.**—The only way to measure distances between two places on a map is to stretch a piece of paper between them; mark off their relative positions upon it, then apply that to the scale of miles given with all good maps, and the distance as the crow flies will be ascertained. **YOUNG MOTHER.**—A bruise should be immediately bathed with very hot or very cold water, to prevent swelling and lessen discoloration. If the bruise be serious, a cloth wrung from hot oil should be applied, changing when cool; or a cloth moistened with arnica should be bound about the bruise. **LOVER OF DANCING.**—Rub them very slightly with damp breadcrumbs, or scrape on them some dry Fuller's earth or French chalk; rub quickly in all directions; or wash with a little spirit of hartshorn, or sponge them with turpentine; if very bad perhaps they should be sent to the cleaner's. **FADDED.**—Sleep is soundest in the first three or four hours. If you wish to preserve your youth and good looks you must not indulge in late hours; insufficient sleep affects the nervous system, the skin loses its freshness and elasticity, and becomes prematurely lined and wrinkled, and the eyes get a tired, drawn look.

THE LAST SLEEP.

If you or I should sleep to-night and wake no more
(There must be one last night you know),
If while we slept, there came a figure in the door
(Some night, dear love, this may be so),
And hovered near one, making that sleep never end,
But blend into an endless day,
The dying must to living one a message send;
Methinks that Love would find a way!

If, while the moon threw its bright shadow on the floor,
And crept thence to thy snowy bed,
Whereon reposed the figure that I so adore,
The face so sweet the queenly head,
Methinks the moonbeam would of passion take
When bending o'er thy beauty rare,
And kiss, ah, tenderly, the eyes they could not wake;
And tenderly, thy lovely hair.

If were so sweet, my love, to know the moon's
Bright light
Had lingered with thee in that hour,
To glorify that time which else was dark! Dullight
The moonlight is, as one's sweet flower!
And I, whom thou perchance hadst left to linger here,
Would know no greater joy than this:
That I loved thee! And cherish with all joy and cheer
The touch of thy sweet virgin kiss.

F. E.—The real balm of Gilead is the juice of a shrub of Syria. It is very valuable, for the reason that the balm yielded by one plant never exceeds sixty drops a day. The ancient Jewish physicians appear to have employed it chiefly as a remedy for melancholia and certain forms of indigestion. **GOODY TREE SHOES.**—Vaseline is good. A very little should be rubbed well into the skin overnight; then in the morning rub the shoes briskly with a cloth, and they will polish beautifully. The vaseline helps to preserve the leather, too, and if the shoes are getting shabby a little lampblack may be mixed with it. **PADLA.**—Break a fresh egg into a basin, remove the stringy part, and then beat it to a pale stiff froth with an egg-beater. Have ready a gill of boiling milk, pour this on to the egg, beating all the time, and continue beating for two or three minutes after the milk has been added. Sweeten, and flavour with a teaspoonful of brandy, and serve at once. **MILKED.**—To take tea stains out of green thin dress, benzine, we think, will be the best and safest—the colour is the difficulty; try a small bit first where it will not be much noticed; if that fails liquid ammonia and water may do, but the benzine is safest; for one shade of green vinegar would brighten the colour if it should be injured. **JOLLY JACK TAR.**—The "log" was originally a log and nothing else, which was hoisted overboard tied to a line with knots in it at equal distances, and according to the rapidly with which the line ran out, judged in early days by a sand-glass, the ship would be sailing so many "knots" an hour. This was recorded in the "log book," which became also the ship's diary. **BUTTER.**—Mix two tablespoonfuls of wholesome smokable with half a pint of cold water. Put a pint of water in a saucepan, and when it boils stir in the mixed meal. Boil the porridge for about ten minutes, stirring all the while. Then place the saucepan on the hob, and cook the porridge slowly for half-an-hour, stirring occasionally. Serve with cold milk and brown sugar.

A TROUBLED FIANCEE.—Yours is certainly a very unpleasant position, but if you mean to marry the young man at all we do not see that anything will be gained by postponing the wedding. As to whether you are "justified in accepting such treatment," you must see that you cannot well help yourself, and it is infinitely more dignified to ignore the situation than to make any fuss about it. It is a pity your lover has not sufficient influence with his parents to insist on their treating you with ordinary courtesy. **STEPHIE.**—If the bath is not in such bad condition that it needs to be re-enamelled, it can be cleaned by the use of powdered whiting mixed to a paste with water. This should be allowed to remain on for an hour or more, and then washed off with plenty of hot water. To re-enamel a bath, remove as much of the old paint as possible, then sandpaper it till it is quite smooth, when it will be ready for painting. Use the proper bath enamel, and apply it thinly. Three coats will be needed to make the result really satisfactory. **FATHEFUL AND TRUE.**—We fear there is nothing for you but patience, and, if you think you have good reason for it, confidence in your lover. Since you do not know his address you can but wait for him to write, and the fact that he has not done so up to now proves that either he is faithless or something serious has happened to prevent him. As we have said, it is for you to decide whether you can trust his fidelity; it is always just to give anyone the benefit of the doubt. **MOTHER OF SIX.**—Fig pudding is as tasty as well as wholesome. Mince very fine a half-pound of suet and the same quantity of figs; then mix with them a half pound of finely-grated breadcrumbs, with a little caster sugar, and enough golden syrup to make a nice paste. Butter a mould, fill it with the mixture, and boil or steam it for one hour and a half. Turn it out, and serve it either plain or with whipped cream or treacle sauce; this is made by flavouring a little white sauce with some grated lemon-rind and a spoonful of golden syrup. **PHARAOH.**—It has never been definitely ascertained which of the Pharaohs reigned in Egypt at the time of the exodus of the Hebrews from that country, but it seems almost certain it was Rameses III., a very vigorous ruler; the time and place of his death is uncertain; do not forget that for any history of events in Egypt during the period covered by the narrative in Genesis, it is necessary, apart from the narrative itself, to rely upon Egyptian inscriptions and monuments; and these are only now yielding up some of their most startling confirmations of the Biblical story. **PROOF.**—Four pounds currants, one pound raspberries. Sugar. Pick the larger stalks and leaves from the currants and raspberries and wash the currants in cold water. Put all on in a jelly bag with four breakfast-cups of water and allow them to heat gradually to boiling point, stirring frequently, then let them boil about ten minutes. Pour the whole in a pointed funnel jelly-bag to drain till all the juice has run out without pressure. Measure the juice, and to each pint allow one pound of sugar and add half pound more. Put this on the fire, and stir frequently till it boils; allow it to boil five minutes, then skim and pot. **MRS.**—It may be made in the following way. Take currants quite ripe, put them in a vessel of some kind, wash them up, and add to them equal quantity of water. Let it stand a night, giving it a good stir now and again, then let it run through a jelly-bag or hair sieve. Let this stand for a good while, and then pour it carefully into a jar that will just hold it (keeping back all sediment). The jar is best to be nearly filled. Add to this half a pound of sugar to each quart of liquid. Cover the jar, but do not cork it, and let it ferment as long as it will. Then it may be bottled for use. It may ferment for four weeks. **ANXIOUS BOB.**—No; you must wait until you can find some maternal acquaintance who will perform the necessary introduction. Of course, if there were any really urgent reason why you should speak to the lady, such a formality could be dispensed with, and you might approach her with an apology for your unconventional behaviour, introduce yourself, and explain the reason of your taking such a step. But as far as we gather from your letter, it is merely a very earnest desire on your part to be counted among the lady's acquaintances, and in such a case you have no right whatever to bring about such a state of affairs in any but the usual way.

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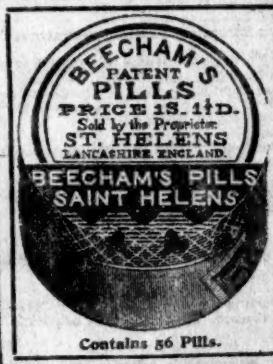
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